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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC POLICY

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF EGYPTIAN YOUTH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
SALLY SAMY ABDEL RAOUF MOHAMED TAYIE

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
PROFESSOR MERVAT ABOU OAF
AND
DR. AMANI ISMAIL

July 2014

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to **Professor Mervat Abou Oaf** and **Dr. Amani Ismail** for their continuous guidance and motivation throughout my thesis. Their availability and consistent providence of information were definitely of great help to me. I could have not imagined having better advisors and mentors for my Master's thesis. Your encouragement for me has always pushed me to work harder.

I also thank the readers of my thesis, **Dr. Rasha Allam** and **Professor Sarah El Khalili** for their time, effort and valued comments and feedback.

I would also like to thank **Mrs. Nesrine Azmy** and **Mrs. Nihal El Gammal** from the Journalism and Mass Communication Department at the American University in Cairo for being helpful and supportive all the time.

I extend my thankfulness to **Dr. Atta Gebril**, head of the Institutional Review Board for his prompt response and concern while obtaining the IRB approval to carry out the study.

My sincere thanks also go to **Professor Azza Heikal**, Dean of College of Language and Communication, The Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport for her concern and continuous support during my thesis. Thank you Doctor Azza, I highly appreciate all what you have done to help me out during this stage.

My profound gratitude goes to my beloved mother **Mrs. Ennas Wahbah**, and my precious father **Professor Samy Tayie** for providing me with care and inspiration. Your countless contributions and support throughout my life is what brought me to where I am today. No matter what I say, it will never express my love and gratitude to you. Your sacrifices are countless.

I deeply thank my beloved dear husband **Ahmed Nashaat El Kherbawy** for his continuous support and sacrifices. You always have faith in my which motivated me to accomplish my thesis. I would not have done it without you. I also would like to thank my little angel **Yassin Ahmed El Kherbawy** for his patience and sufferings because of my being busy taking away from his time to accomplish my work.

Besides, I extend my thanks to my siblings **Nora Tayie** and **Mohamed Tayie** for supporting and believing in me. May God bless both of you dear ones.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my in laws, my father in law **Engineer Nashaat El Kherbawy** for his fatherly advices and my mother in law **Professor Nehal Elwan** for her concern and support to me during the thesis.

Sally Samy Tayie

*My work is dedicated to
my precious parents
my beloved husband,
and
sweetheart Yassin,*

ABSTRACT

The American University in Cairo

Thesis, Master of Arts, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Title : Impact of Social Media on Political Participation of Egyptian Youth

Author : Sally Samy Abdel Raouf Mohamed Tayie

Research Advisor: Professor Mervat Abou Oaf and Dr. Amani Ismail

Month/Year : July 2014

This study aims at examining the role played by social media in empowering and encouraging the Egyptian youth for political participation. Previous studies found that traditional media have not been influential enough to drive youth's political participation. On the other hand, recent studies found that social media have a significant role in this respect. The current study investigates the possible roles of the social media in the transition to democracy in Egypt; questioning the ability of social media to act as a platform where citizens are represented and empowered enough to transform virtual online discussions to real life actions. The study was carried out on a purposive sample of 400 young Egyptians aged 18-30 based on the statistics of social media users in Egypt. A sample of opinion leaders and elites in the field was also studied. The research follows a triangulation by combining two research methodologies; survey as a quantitative method and in-depth interviews as a qualitative one. The theoretical framework is Uses and Gratifications Theory. According to the findings of the study, social media became most prominent among youth in Egypt after January 25th Revolution. The study also found that most Egyptian youth use social media on a daily basis. Egyptian youth consider social media as a platform through which they manage to share their common concerns and possibly turn it into collective real-life actions; which reflects their interest in becoming more politically involved.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Academic interest in the virtual societies and “social networks” has increased over the last few years. Many scholars have been studying the Internet and social networks, as well as their different impacts on different societies. Not only have societies been impacted by such networks but also traditional media have had their share of the impact. The new media have influenced, to a great extent, traditional media in different ways, traditional media mainly referring to newspapers, radio and television. New media have mainly added new dimensions to the communication process in its traditional form, which impacted the content, senders and the receivers. Such dimensions include interactivity and increasing the receiver's/audience's choices of selection. With such dimensions receivers gained more control over what they expose themselves to by selecting to use the media texts that they prefer and that are suitable for their needs.

Consequently, such dimensions have led to a great deal of alterations and changes in media practices. This change goes back to the fact that the interactive communication relies mainly on the Internet as the main communication channel. This interactive communication led to the model of communication in which the audiences turned from mere consumers of media texts to become producers or communicators themselves. Interactive communication has been most prominently evident through social media which have managed to create an environment that is open, social and dynamic and that in turn encourages creativity.

With the emergence of social media, a new definition of networking and socializing has been introduced. Today, social networks play prominent roles in connecting people and facilitating communication among friends and families. This goes back to the features offered by social media; for example, communication now can occur through text, voice and video. Therefore, the interactive communication model remains valid and is further enhanced through the electronic societies formed by social media. Social media have remarkably changed and so has its role. Throughout the past few years, social media

managed to have its impact on young people's political participation. Political participation has a great importance in any modern society. It is through political participation that people could make some changes and express themselves.

According to Aristotle, politics usually stand for the power of societies. They are social activities through which the human beings tend to improve their lives and create the good society and better lives (Heywood, 2013). Weber saw politics from another perspective; he defined politics as the “struggle for power”. Max Weber, a prominent scholar in Sociology, claims that politics is a broad term, but it is related to any leadership in action (Weber, 1919, p. 82). Though the two scientists look at things differently, they both agreed on one thing; there should be an action either through the citizens or the leaders.

Politics may also be defined as “the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live” (Heywood, 2013, p.2). Heywood stated that politics is usually connected to the conflicts in the society and disagreements about the existing rules. Due to the various needs, opinions and interests people disagree and therefore they must work with others in order to impose the changes they want.

Statement of the Research Problem

Determining the research problem is the first and most important step in carrying out any research, as the steps that follow mainly depend on it. Setting a research problem guides the use of a suitable research method, data collection tools, and other important research steps by pinpointing the data required (Carter, 1991, pp. 40-46).

With the turn of the twenty first century, new media started to play an important role in shaping our lives. They became important platforms for discussions and on different aspects of life and social matters. In many developing countries, social media have transformed the function of media from being a mouthpiece of the state, to media and sites for participation of citizens and ordinary people. People themselves have become contributors to the content of the new media.

In light of the rapid and wide spread of social media and the increased number of users, as well as the political turmoil in the Arab area which led to mass uprisings which were described by the international media as the “Arab Spring”, social networks have become an important phenomenon in our modern world. Social media have become important factors which affect public opinion. The effects of social media have emerged on issues related to freedom of expression and publishing, as well as democracy and human rights. Social media enabled and empowered people to form groups of peers/users with common interests/concerns and take part in discussions about these issues.

Since the January 25 Revolution, there has been a remarkable increase in the political involvement of young Egyptians who became more involved than ever before in the public sphere. Therefore, this research attempts to address the following statement:

New 'social' media, unlike traditional media, provided a platform on which citizens create their own version of news and updates on current events. Social media are believed by many to be single-issue oriented and lacking a consistent long-term impact and also their credibility is under question. Consequently, the extent to which social media helped represent and empower Egyptian youth for political participation as a vital step for establishing democracy needs to be further investigated.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

I. The Rise of New Media

The term "New Media" emerged and became widespread in the 1990s, especially over the last twenty-five years. These years witnessed massive alterations with the shift into media which mainly depend on the use of digital computers. The term 'new media' refers to media that depend on digital technologies and that include features that are not normally present in traditional media, such as interactivity and the development of networks, all dependent on digital distribution and related computing technology that does not exist in traditional/old media (Herring, 2004, p. 47).

Consequently, it would be reasonable to highlight the "new media revolution" during this time with the prominence and rapid advancement that new media are going through. The scope of new media involves the Internet, or the World Wide Web, with its different "families", such as news sites, websites, blogs, social networking sites, online and offline multimedia, computer games, instant and text messaging through mobile phones and others (Manovich, 2001).

The concept of new media refers to the merging of two paths that were previously divided; these are media technologies and computing. A historical overview on the development of both paths would indicate that they developed in parallel in the middle of the twentieth century. This occurred when "a modern digital computer" which performed numerical data calculations efficiently was introduced. At the same time, modern media technologies emerged leading to the ability to store images, text and sound using forms such as the gramophone record, film stock and others. The fusion of these two trajectories resulted in "new media": the transformation of media forms and content into data that is numerical, and so becomes accessible using computers. This refers to "graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces and text" becoming "computable", as in turning into "computer data" (ibid, p. 144).

In light of this, comprehending new media is usually highly attached to using computers mainly for purposes of distribution and exhibition. This means that a media text that is distributed through Internet-connected computers, such as e-books and website content, is considered new media. On the other hand, the hard copy book and any content distributed on paper cannot be considered new media. The same applies to photographs that are executed or put on CDs to be viewed on computers, versus hard copy printed photographs (Manovich, 2001, p.43). Today, what makes new media unique is that fact that they are based on digital technology which makes the information or content they deliver easy to process, store and retrieve.

New media came with major changes in the field that impacted its different processes, ranging from audience use, to how production and distribution functions. Changes introduced by new media can be recognized as "technological, textual, conventional and cultural". The characteristics of such alterations can be easily reflected through the concepts that emerged, in the late 1980s; "digital, interactive, virtual, networked and simulated" (Lister, 2009, p.13).

Such changes are also reflected in the significant impact new media have on the processes of traditional media. With the advent of digital television and online publications, it becomes obvious that the use of digital computers has led to the transformation of 'old' or traditional media. This impact has been extended to one of the most traditional media forms with the printing press being highly altered through the use and application of software such as the image manipulation software Adobe Photoshop.

Despite the dramatic technological changes introduced to the traditional media with digitization, other alterations have emerged. According to Shapiro the "emergence of new, digital technologies signals a potentially radical shift of who is in control of information, experience and resources" (Shapiro cited in Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 322). This refers to the fact that traditional media have been known to be gatekeepers and more or less the dominant sources of information for audiences/citizens. With new technologies' interactive characteristics, the sources of information could in many instances be the audiences or citizens themselves.

Digitization in general has introduced a lot of changes to the media landscape; this applies to traditional media as well as new media. For example, with the introduction of satellite and digital television, the medium of television has been undergoing a major transformation. The same applies to the computer/Internet: the computer now has far more capacity and power than it had a decade ago. This capacity is highly reflected through the Internet's capabilities to deliver information besides other various online services has been witnessing massive growth over the past ten years, redefining technology. The concept of convergence has become significantly applicable to these technologies through online as well as interactive television besides video on demand and others. Therefore, adopting media can be understood primarily as a process that is social, cultural and economic, and secondly as a process that includes meeting audience's demands and expectations (Livingstone, 2002).

"New new media" or social media is a term that describes new media after the introduction of Web 2.0- media that is characterized by high interactivity (Levinson, 2012, p. 1). New new media include Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Wikipedia, Blog sites and others. Such media have millions of users all over the world and are altering and shifting every single feature of our societal and cultural lives. Such alterations include how we consume media (how we watch TV or read the news) and extend to how we choose and elect presidents. New new media characterized by Web 2.0 features, introduces and highlights the concept of user generated content. As compared to traditional new media (such as emails and websites), new new media have led consumers to become prosumers, meaning consumers and producers at the same time; and in the same manner has led readers to become writers and publishers, viewers to become performers (Levinson, 2012). Besides being dubbed "user-generated content", this phenomenon has also been referred to by some scholars as "participatory journalism" (Bowman Cited in Marina Vujnovic *et al.*, 2010, p. 286). This term refers to traditional media working along with the audiences; through adopting convergence, distributing their content through multi-platforms, audiences are given the opportunity to "appropriate, reshape and redistribute" this content (Marina Vujnovic *et al.*, 2010, p. 286). This means that new media provide users with the advantages of both types of communication-interpersonal and mass communication- while at the same time allowing users to overcome their disadvantages. For example, users can

communicate with mass audience at the same time while being able to direct special messages to individuals (Crosbie, 2002). Also, the fact that content distribution and "communication functions" are not only in the hands of professional media institutions anymore, ordinary people and non-professionals can now perform such functions (Domingo *et al.*, 2008, Cited in Marina Vujnovic *et al.*, 2010, p. 287)

As a consequent, new new media/social media are known to have stimulated movements worldwide, such as The Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and The Tea Party. Such "catalytic" characteristics of present-day media call for a totally new perspective when considering how media delivered to the masses, the industry and culture are experiencing the most critical and significant changes ever (Levinson, 2012).

Social Media

The first appearance of social networks goes back to 1997, with the emergence of the very first network called sixdegree.com. Few services were available on this website when it began, but users were able to search for people and use instant messaging. Later on, these services developed to include having friends' lists and being able to read your friends' list of friends based on having your own personal profile. Despite attracting few users, sixdegree.com stopped in 2000. The period since the year 1997 till 2001 witnessed the emergence of other free social networking sites which were more advanced than the first one (Hart, 2011, p.31).

The Internet allowed for the existence of social media, which provide users with services such as creating their own accounts or pages on the site. They also allow users to communicate, exchange and share ideas with their friends by enabling them to produce and create their own content. Such content ranges from normal text to multimedia text (photos, videos and voice), which allow for an endless type of communication among individuals and groups (Mizuko *et al.*, 2008).

Social media sites can be divided into three categories based on their use. First, the primary type refers to social media sites that include users' personal profiles and which provide them with services such as sharing information,creating images and videos and sending and receiving personal messages (e.g. Facebook, Myspace, Hifive). The second

category refers to social media sites which are mainly concerned with work and career, and these are counted as a crucial type. Such sites mainly connect business owners and job seekers together through personal profiles of the users that contain details of their previous jobs, experience and activities. The third category refers to social media sites that are based on micro blogging. Examples include Geographical sites such as Bright-Kit, Blark and Twitter (Cho *et al*, 2009).

In light of this, three concepts that are of strong relevance to social media should be mentioned: the virtual world, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. Social media eased the communication between people, which in turn led to the creation and the existence of the first concept: the electronic or virtual world. In the virtual world, real life activities become easier; for example it becomes effortless to find people who share your goals and interests, everything is just one click away (Hamada, 2008, p.212).

The second concept, Web 2.0, is mainly the second generation of advancement in the web. With its emergence in 2004, it presented more developed features than Web 1.0. Web 2.0 enhanced the social factor through enabling and enhancing user generated content; users can produce and disseminate content rather than just receive it. Moreover, it further enhanced interactive communication, where individuals and groups can interact with each other. In light of this, it is obvious that Web 2.0 turned the Internet from merely a library or a publishing space into a social platform on which people engage in activities such as chatting, discussing and sharing information. Social networking sites represent the most prominent example of Web 2.0 features (Greeber & Martin, 2009, p. 3). The third concept, Web 3.0 is the third generation of development on the Internet. It was first introduced and used in 2006, "as a new method for building computer applications in one frame". The Web 3.0 based applications can be utilized in the various electronic devices, such as mobile phones, and any "Personal Digital Aid (PDA) or computers" (Greeber & Martin, 2009, p.79)

Social networking sites reinforce the application of the previous three concepts. The most popular social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, besides the different forums, blogs and wikis as families that emerged with the web development. The

following section introduces the emergence and characteristics of each of the mentioned sites and services.

A. Facebook:

Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and two of his colleagues in Harvard University. The founders were motivated to launch such a site in order to establish a communication medium specific to Harvard University students. Soon, Facebook became widespread and its use crossed the borders of Harvard University to other American universities besides universities in Canada and Britain. This led to Facebook turning from a website to a company which multiplied its services to users; it was no longer restricted to users' profiles and images but also started offering other types of communication that keep developing over time. For example, Facebook became a virtual mall in which shopping was one of the activities provided to the users.

The popularity of Facebook rapidly increased, leading to a company worth billions of dollars, and with the number of its subscribers reaching more than 750 million users from all over the world (Khalid, 2013, p. 38). Becoming the most used social networking site is directly related to Facebook's features which ease interaction and communication among people. Facebook's popularity led to its collaboration with Microsoft. This collaboration was most prominent when Facebook and Microsoft both sponsored presidential candidates' interviews during the last American presidential elections in 2012. Facebook users are not merely individuals; Facebook is also used by various firms and organizations. Also, due to its spread use worldwide, Facebook is now available in more than twenty languages (Hart, 2011, p.31). The number of those who use Facebook in the Arab World has hit 32 million users in 2011; this figure represents a 50 per cent increase in the users' numbers from 2010 (Report on Social Media, 2011). This figure shows that Facebook has become an obsession or an addiction for its users who logon to their accounts on a daily basis.

The media's attention has been recently directed to Facebook's use in "criminal investigations" and "college disciplinary hearings". In addition, it is often used by companies to "screen job applicants" and by police in university campuses to keep track of the "college party scene". Despite these facts being covered and mentioned in the media,

there is not, so far, a published investigation that is based on Facebook (Report on Social Media, 2011, p. 36).

Facebook's features and characteristics enable it to provide services that distinguish it as a social networking site. Such services include: providing users with the ability to create personal profiles in which users' information can be uploaded; adding friends; and establishing "groups" or "pages" which provide space for online communities since you can create groups for families, friends or those who share common interests. Facebook provides users with the "wall", which is mainly a space created for the purpose of giving users a space on which they can receive public messages. It also provides "pokes" through which users can grab each others' attention. On Facebook, users can upload and exchange images with friends, they can write "status" through which they express how they feel or inform their friends of their immediate actions or locations. They can also stay updated with friends, groups and activities through their home page "News Feed". The Arabic language was adopted by Facebook since 2009 and later the Persian language was made available during the Iranian presidential elections (Gad, 2012, p.164, 165)

Over the last few years, Facebook has been facing several controversies. Due to its strong impact on students who use it all the time, several educational institutions expressed their objection to Facebook's addictive influence on students. Also, Facebook is running into legal issues, sparked by Zuckerberg's friends who claim that "Facebook has stolen their sources and other intellectual property"(Gad, 2013, p.166). On the social and political impact, Facebook has been blocked in several countries, especially with the wave of social media-inspired political movements all over the world. For example, it has been blocked in Syria (ibid).

B. Twitter

Twitter is another significant social networking site. Twitter was first introduced to the people in October 2006, as a social networking site on the Internet that provides users with both "mass and interpersonal communication" (Williams, cited in Johnson, 2009, p. 3). As previously mentioned, Twitter falls under the category of social networking sites, which depend on "micro blogging", meaning users are producing and sharing short messages; on

Twitter the message should not exceed 140 characters (Murphy, 2008 cited in Johnson, 2009, p.3). The popularity of Twitter goes back to its ease of use and accessibility; it only requires an Internet connection and a device such as laptop or mobile phone.

One feature which makes Twitter unique and gives it an advantage over other social media is that it enables users to send free messages while keeping track of their network members' feeds. This makes it easy for users to form a network of 'similar-interest-users'. Twitter can also be considered as an effective marketing tool since it allows users to have their own "badge" put beside their "tweets" or the messages they send (Johnson, 2009, pp.6-7).

Users of Twitter can "follow" a large number of other users but select a few from whom they receive "updates" in the form of messages. Further, conversations on Twitter can be both public and private; conversations can be public using hash tags and directing it to specific users using "@username", and can be private using direct messages that are only viewed by the message sender and receiver. Motivated by Twitter's features than enable a wide reach to large numbers of audiences, large mass media organizations, such as BBC (50,000 followers), CNN (500,000 followers) and New York Times (300,000 followers), have their accounts through which they send immediate news updates to thousands of followers. Politicians also use Twitter to gain more popularity and have a direct communication with their "followers", such as Barack Obama who has almost 500,000 followers and Hilary Clinton who has more than 8500 followers (Johnson, 2009, p.7).

C. YouTube

YouTube is a social networking site which specializes in uploading and downloading videos. Through this site users get to upload and download videos for free. Ever since its launch it has been witnessing a massive number of users/visitors; the number often goes beyond 100 million per day (Al Gazzar, 2013). An interesting figure to add would be the average time spent by users in the USA visiting YouTube: 164 minutes per day. This figure exceeds that of television viewership (Addington, 2012, p. 76).

Such figures made researchers shed the light on the advantages provided by YouTube to its users. These advantages include the fact that it provides a free service of uploading and

downloading videos, that videos are available to be watched any time and for an unlimited number of times, and that it encourages users to give their direct feedback by leaving comments on the videos. YouTube presents an effective social networking website: through its audio visual material, it allows users to consume, share and produce content (Khalid, op cit, pp. 44-45).

D. Forums

Forums are spaces provided by different websites to users for discussions of topics of common interest. With the advent of new media, user generated content and audience interactivity, forums became widely spread (Mothana, 2013).

E. Blogs

Blogs represent another form of social media, providing users with the service of easy electronic publishing. Individuals are able to effortlessly publish information in the form of articles or multimedia texts for free, without any requirement of permissions or approvals from editors. Further, blogs do not require any programming competency; ordinary users can have their own blogs through which they have fans or readers who interact with them through their comments and feedback. Blogs can be created through web sites such as Blogger provided by Google, Windows Life Space, Microsoft and Yahoo (AlAqad, 2014).

F. Wikis

Wikis are websites that permit collaborative editing of documents. In other words, it allows users to add their own content and gives opportunities for them and others to edit and modify this content. This creates global encyclopedias formed by users from all over the world. The most popular wiki is Wikipedia; according to Intel every minute six articles are produced and published on Wikipedia (Gad, 2012).

Characteristics of Social Media

According to scholars, the characteristics of social media give them an advantage over, and make them more easily distinguished from, other forms of media. These features are

key to attracting large numbers of users. Characteristics of social media include having the traits and communication models that allow for both interpersonal and mass communication messages directed to individuals can "simultaneously" be delivered to large numbers of audiences.

This enables an efficient "reach" to massive audiences while maintaining the characteristics of individualized messages. Furthermore, social media provide the "virtual space" necessary to establish online communities in which life events and memories can be registered and recorded (Williams *et al*, 1988, pp.12-113). In light of the aforementioned characteristics, it can be inferred that social media have introduced significant changes that characterize current "human communication". These changes can be divided into three main categories: interactivity, de-massification and asynchronicity (Williams *et al*, 1988). In the following section, these categories are discussed in detail.

a. Interactivity and Social Media

The Internet introduced profound alterations to the traditional communication process. It transformed this process from a "one-to-many model" to a "many-to-many" one. This was enabled through the previously mentioned concept of user-generated content in which users, with the aid of the needed technology, can publish their own media text online (Mothana, 2013, p. 45).

Consequently, due to "technology convergence" of new media, the mass communication model has radically been shifted, introducing audiences to new forms through which they interact with each other. According to Crosbie (2002), there are three types of communication media: "Interpersonal media" referring to communication between two individuals, "Mass media" referring to communication between one party and groups, and "New media" referring to communication between many individuals or groups to many individuals or groups (ibid).

Rice (1984) argues that new media can be defined as "communication technologies that enable or facilitate user-to-user interactivity and interactivity between user and information" (Schorr *et al*, 2003, p.57). This definition represents the strong relation between new media, under which social media fall, and interactivity. In that sense,

interactivity can be explained as "the degree to which participants in a communication process can have control over and can exchange roles"; meaning that at some point, senders can be receivers and receivers can be senders of content (Schorr *et al*, 2003, p.57).

Before the introduction of technology, thinking of interactivity always referred to interpersonal or face-to-face type of communication between individuals. However it is possible for the idea of interactivity to exist in "mediated communication" forms. Interactivity in the media has been reinforced with the introduction of "new media technology" which enables text producers, such as artists, video games and film makers, to publish their work to and interact with the "big world" (Ibid, p. 57).

Despite the fact that interactivity exists mostly through new and social media, it is also applicable to traditional media. For example, audiences interact with text producers in radio and television talk shows through listener or viewer participation, and also in traditional print media through "letters to the editor". Such traditional forms of interactivity were enhanced through new media as media producers starting adopting convergence by delivering their content through several platforms rather than only one, which further enriches interactivity.

According to Flew (2005), new media technologies, through interactivity, strengthen users' "sense of belonging" through the virtually established experience they go through. As previously mentioned, interactivity is highly existent in people's real lives, consequently with the new interactive online communication, users are provided with a "second life" on which they have full control and selectivity (Flew, 2005, p. 101).

Although interactivity is often referred to as a crucial concept that should be taken into consideration when comprehending new media processes, it varies from one form of new media to another. According to Feldman (2009), "digital satellite television" is considered one form of new media that uses digital technology to multiply the number of television channels received by audiences. However, this form of new media does not effectively offer an "interactive dimension". This example shows that despite interactivity being a major characteristic of new media, it is not inherent in all their forms (Crosbie, 2002, p.57).

New media are exposed to continuous change and alteration due to being continuously modified and reintroduced through "the interaction between creative uses of the masses, emerging technology and cultural changes" (ibid, p.58).

b. De-Massification and Social Media

The term de-massification mainly refers to the changes introduced to the mass level of communication. Such changes can be explained this way: instead of message producers holding full control of mass communication, media consumers started having a share. This comes as a result of the Web 2.0 enabled user-generated content, which, in many instances, enabled consumers to become text producers. This is highly visible in social media where users get to publish content that can be used by massive numbers of audiences. Consequently, the process of de-massification applies to a great extent with the advent of social media.

c. Asynchronicity and Social Media

Asynchronicity is one of the advantages provided by new and social media. This concept refers to new media providing audiences with the space and option to send and receive messages at times that are suitable for every "individual user", without limiting them to a specific time.

Other characteristics of social media may include (Khalifa, 2014, pp. 69-70):

1- Free services:

It is not only free services that the social networks offer but also it is easy to subscribe to and use these social media. It is also easy to form virtual groups and exchange views and attitudes among members, as well as to build links among members. It is also simple to connect with different people and share topics with them.

2- The creation of social networks reflects freedom of expression, supports democratic thinking, as well as other social, cultural and political ideas. It is also easy to construct new sites.

3- Continuity: all chats and messages on social media are registered and people can refer to them at any time, after minutes, hours, days or even months. This continuity distinguishes this content from content which is exchanged in normal social situations and is not registered; without a trace to retrieve.

4- The social media are also good media for popular and societal mobilization. The first three months of 2011, was a time of many changes with respect to the use of social media. Social media were used as a medium to organize demonstrations and uprisings as witnessed in some countries in the Arab World. Governments and state officials also started using social media as a channel of communication with citizens.

Consequently, people, especially youth, have many reasons and motivations to join social media. These reasons can be classified as follows (Gad, 2012, p. 163). Personal reasons; the individual may be interested in meeting and making new friends that can extend to include some other countries. Another personal reason would be a desire to break the daily routine of life. Political reasons; here the motivation may be strong to search for political discussion or search for policy and decision makers. Professional reasons: the desire to improve one's professional background and competition. This may also be a fast way to achieve the tasks and jobs through the social media. Institutional reasons; institutions may search to create their own websites/accounts online on social networks in order to reach their clients and large audiences.

Social media may also offer a group of services to users (Balhaj, p. 83). Such services include: Personal profiles, through which it becomes easy to know some information about the person such as age, gender, date of birth. etc.; Friends and relations: this applies to the friend that one may meet and know online; Messaging: this enables sending direct messages to other persons whether they are known to the person or not; Photos & Albums: social media allow its users to exchange photos and to create a limitless number of albums and upload hundreds of photos. They also allow sharing these photos with friends so that they can see them and leave comments. Groups: a lot of social networks allow users to create groups which have specific interests and goals. Owners of these groups may have spaces like small forums for data exchange and discussions. They also allow meeting through creating "events" and inviting the group members to join. Pages: Facebook

invented this idea and it was used effectively for commercial purposes and in advertising campaigns. These pages allow firms to present their products to specific categories of the site users.

Impact of Social Media

The computerization of culture did not only lead to the emergence of new media such as computer games and virtual worlds, but it also redefined the existing ones such as photography and cinema (Manovich, 2001). Accordingly, previous media forms have been transformed into the content for new media, including, for example, the emergence of video in the late 1970s. Initially, video was a new media form as it transformed both TV and cinema into content. Computers now have the capacity to render all previous media forms as content, including the typewriter, fax machine, camera, radio, e-television and video. The boundaries between these previously separate forms become increasingly blurred as these technologies can be contained within a single medium, and in some cases within a single computer-based application. Therefore, there is no need for a range of different technologies for the processing of different types of data. Rather, all that is required is the computer (Grane & Beer, 2008).

There is a pattern emerging with new media in that media consumers use media in the on-demand mode, as in the case of DVDs, iPods and MP3 players, Walkmans, YouTube, MySpace, other social networking sites, satellite and Internet radio, on-demand TV and videogames. This is in contrast with traditional viewers of broadcast and cable television where they watch TV at a certain time to catch their favorite TV show. With "new media" consumers are more in control of what, when and where they view, listen or interact with, and they have also more variety to choose from (Greeber & Martin, 2009).

The use of social media has also some effects on the learning process. It does not merely serve as a source for information and learning materials but it also helps to widen the horizon of individuals and make them understand the new world with its temporary characteristics. The use of social media helps sustain the learning process when compared to traditional learning.

Today, the amount of public affairs information and discussion online is massive, and its fluidity and dynamism are unprecedented. This goes back to the influence of the user-generated news content; where blogs took on a role of the Fifth Estate by critiquing traditional media and offering an alternative view. Political bloggers have been successful in influencing traditional media's agendas, and also in mobilizing citizenry for political action (Dylko *et al*, 2009).

Furthermore, social media led to the emergence of a new kind of journalism called “citizen journalism”. Citizen journalism is the term applied to situations in which ordinary people, who are neither trained journalists nor work for professional institutions, do essentially what professional reporters do -- report information. Such reports on information can take many forms, from a podcast editorial to a report about a city council meeting on a blog. It can also be an expressive image about incident or a whole news story. It can include text, pictures, audio and video.

According to international affairs blogger Sindhuri Nandhakumar “Citizen Journalism has endowed many people with a voice that they didn’t have before, enabling them to be important tools of information and change” (<http://journalism.about.com/od/citizenjournalism/a/whatiscitizen.html>).

Citizen journalism or “citizen media” rely mainly on the participation of ordinary people in the media business and processes. They do not only gather information but also comment on it without having any professional background. Citizen journalists also take care of the process of dissemination of information, relying on the new technologies, among which are social media.

Citizen journalism has almost brought the monopoly of traditional journalism to an end. Any ordinary citizen can now produce an editorial material; traditional media are no longer the only sources of information. Good examples of these reports are reports and video clips on the London bombing in 2002, and the Tsunami disaster in South Asia. These two major incidents were reported by ordinary citizens using their own personal cameras. Citizen journalism was also apparent during the Parliamentary Elections in Egypt in 2010; when citizen journalists reported on and emphasized the violations and fraud of the elections results, and the forging that took place in many constituencies in Egypt. These reports were published very widely on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Citizen journalism reached its peak during the events of January 25th 2011. A great number of videos clips, photos and reports were uploaded on different social media. The large amount of materials on social media forced the traditional media in Egypt to change their tone and take a more neutral stand in covering the events. This was clear from February 4th when an obvious shift appeared, especially in the state media's coverage of events.

Citizen journalism represents a revolution in the world of media. The leaders of this revolution are the young people who lead all other segments of the society with respect to knowledge and making full use of modern technology. Some important media outlets try to include this kind of new journalist in order to attract a larger audience. For example, the CNN Website has a section devoted to materials produced by citizen journalists (readers). In the Arab World, Al Jazeera network takes the lead; as it assigns a section of its website for materials and news feeds produced by ordinary people, including text, photos or video clips produced by web cameras, video cameras or even mobile phones.

In addition to controlling what the users consume, citizen journalists also contribute to the content of what is offered by the media, especially on the Internet. An example is the Wikis, in which the content and editing of the content are in the hands of the volunteers/users of the site, but subject to the democratic approval of the users of the Wiki (Logan, 2010).

Social media have an international nature which crosses boundaries of space and time. This is reflected through virtual societies with special natures; they do not abide by cultures and limitations of traditional societies. These virtual societies have very minimal, if any, kind of control or censorship such as compared to that imposed by states and regulators on real-life societies (Dahlberg, 2007, p. 837).

Speaking of virtual societies, the public sphere is considered one of the most prominent. The public sphere can be defined as the space which enables citizens to express themselves, their opinions and attitudes freely, where they can engage in debates and information exchanges. It also urges citizens to build some kind of consensus or agreements on issues which are subject to rational discussions. It is a kind of virtual or imaginative world which does not necessarily exist in a specific or known geographical area or place (Gerhards &

Shafer, 2009, p.2). The rapid development of the new media and computer technologies have the potential and the impact to transform the very nature of the public sphere and open up new channels of communications to allow for more voices to exist (Greeber & Martin, 2009, p. 6). Public sphere consists of a group of individuals who have similar characteristics and manage to communicate and interact on an equal footing with each other (Dahlberg, op cit, p. 834).

The public sphere also depends on the freedom of individuals to enter and move to the global dimension, if possible. Here equality in freedom of expression is an important issue; an issue that is emphasized through new and social media where global citizens are provided with access to each other. Participants in the public sphere do not necessarily know each other but they have some awareness and understanding of specific issues; any individual can take part with his ideas and contributions. Public sphere also attracts a lot of people to move from their private sphere to a broader one: the public sphere.

This idea of virtual societies and the public sphere shed the light on another effect that social media introduced; the interactive communication of audiences. It has been argued that the increased interactivity of the new media allows the audience to play around with and make their own composite identities from various sources. With so many different communities now open to users on the Web, people can simply choose which identities they want to adopt and which they want to reject. This also allows individuals to decide how they define themselves rather than having to stick to the limited and narrow number of choices that once defined individuals in the past.

Websites like YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace reflect the understanding of participatory culture. They do not only create virtual communities but also allow audiences to become producers as well as consumers of the media. This increased interactivity among the audience of social media prompted some critics to suggest that there has been an increased "democratization" in the nature of the new media compared to the old media. "Citizen Journalism", as described above, is an example to illustrate the increased ability of ordinary people to become involved in the production of the media, moving power away from the "author" into the hands of the audience.

Social media became important platforms that governments began to use to include specific groups of citizens who are social media users and integrate them in the process of decision making. This occurs through providing citizens with information and listening to their attitudes and opinions. This new format of communication between the governments and citizens may be seen as the new version of the traditional press releases used in public relations (Myongho, 2013, p. 311).

An example of the government's interaction with citizens through social media occurred in 2009; the USA government decided to use social media to connect with the citizens to foster transparency and encourage participation of citizens in the decision making process (Ines, 2013, p. 123). The same happened in Egypt after the January 25th events when the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) created its own Facebook page and used it very heavily to communicate with the young people in Egypt. The Facebook page of SCAF was launched on the 10th of October 2012. The Ministry of Interior also created its Facebook page in 2012. (ibid, p. 315).

This phenomenon spread all over the world with politicians and political parties realizing the importance of social media. During the US 2008 presidential elections, and Iranian elections of 2009, candidates used the social media intensively to communicate with the citizens and to gain their support. Obama was very active in using social media during the 2008 presidential elections to gain support and to collect donations for his campaign.

Moreover, firms and businesses have also appreciated the importance of social media. Now they use these media as marketing and public relations tools to communicate with potential audiences. Through social media they can transmit information and news to their audiences swiftly and directly.

Social media have also become important tools in times of crises. Companies and businesses began to use the social media in the USA from April 2006. Facebook allowed firms to have their own pages next to individual sites. Within two weeks from that date, more than 4000 firms were registered and had Facebook accounts. From that time, Facebook emerged as a new medium for public relations and building relations with the

internal and external audiences of firms (Waters, 2009, pp. 102-103). Social media were also used for crisis and disaster management. That was clear in the case of the Haitian government's use of social media during the damaging earthquakes which took place in 2010. Japan also used social media and the mobile phones to manage and control the crisis of the 2010 earthquakes.

Crucial discussions have been going on about the potential social effects of social media on personal relations. While some scholars have found that social media strengthen the social links among individuals, others have shown that they weaken social links among people. (Tayie *et al*, 2012, p.53).

Describing the impact and indications of new media, Neumann suggested that the line between mass and interpersonal communication as well as private and public communication will eventually disappear as a result of the booming development of a global network that is highly connected. This network includes different types of text; electronic, audio and video (Neumann cited in Croteau *et al*, 2003). He also proposed that new media will have strong effects on people's channels of communication such as overcoming the barrier of distance, raising and boosting the communication capacity and pace, presenting more room for communication that is highly interactive, and leading to convergence of formerly divided communication forms.

As a result, according to scholars and researchers, including Callum Rymer and Douglas Kellner, the Internet, and new media in general, present the possibility and have the power to lead to a public sphere that can be described as democratic in the postmodern era. This comes as a result of new media providing citizens with an interactive platform on which they can become a vital part of a debate that is based on solid information and that is not based on hierarchical knowledge coming from specific sources. On the other hand, some observers indicate that having a "virtual sphere" is not applicable; despite the mentioned advantages of providing citizens with a platform to express themselves, "technology alone cannot foster democracy" and this goes back to the idea that the Internet and new media help enhance "political communication" but does not introduce effective changes to its "internal structure" (Singer, 2006, p.266). Also, some scholars, including Robert McChesney and Herman, suggest that the impact of new media on the society is not as

promising. This goes back to their analysis that only a limited number of dominant international telecommunications corporations managed to have incredible worldwide impact, which contradicts the idea of new media offering the potential to achieve democracy (Noah, 2003).

Other scholars who pinpoint the positive and negative sides and significance of new media include Lister (2009). They suggested that early studies that investigated new media were mostly characterized by the strong impact of technology, meaning that they focused on the impact of new media based on the technology itself. Such scholars argue that there are certain social networks responsible for developing, implementing and funding such technologies and that such network should be traced for more solid results.

With the many changes new media introduced, one which is considered prominent would be their impact on society and the extent to which they cause social alterations. Consequently, it is significant to discuss new media from another angle, which is how different societies adopt them; as research has shown this to be relevant when tracking Western countries' adoption of new media and how this introduced social change. Acquiring new media differs among different countries and from one house-hold to another based on different cultural and social factors. One of the significant factors that determine new media adoption in a society is possessing the financial resources to acquire new media. The higher a socio-economic class is in society, the more likely they will have the desire and the ability to acquire new media (Livingstone, 2002).

Egyptian Youth and Social Media

Governments seem to have seen the new media initially as fostering their power and authority (ibid). However, the effects of social media had the opposite result. Social media broke the monopoly of both the state and traditional media as the gate keepers or the main sources of information. According to White, the idea of gate keeping mainly refers to editors in newsrooms, or those in charge in traditional media institutions, acting as a "gate" between the actual events that occur and are covered throughout the day and the "few" that the audiences "would have the opportunity to see" (Singer, 2006, p.267). In that sense,

according to Singer (2006) with social media enabling ordinary people/audiences to share/disseminate limitless amounts of information, "journalists' hegemony as gatekeepers is threatened" (Singer, 2006, p.268).

Furthermore, social media also allowed people to follow the different trends and events in other countries and in different parts of the world. Social media, through their existence in the daily life of young people, allowed them to develop new expectations for communication, discover non-traditional sources of information and obtain a lot of information from a new group of 'friends' in a virtual world.

Social media have not been merely used to plan for protests or demonstrations, but also as forums for political discussions. They also helped political activists to get together and find each other easily. Certainly, without participants, social media will be non-existent; therefore, its value and importance come from its users/consumers. This can be emphasized especially with the fact that, the virtual world where these participants meet and discuss is not very different from the real world (Iskander, 2011, p. 1126).

Young people were born and raised in the age of computers and online communication. Today's teens share self-created content, post their opinions, and link to other content online more than any other demographic group. In no other time in history have young people enjoyed such opportunity to make themselves visible to, and heard by, diverse audiences. At the same time, it is worth indicating that this exposure entails some risks (Herring & Kapidzic, 2013, p.3).

This can be strongly applied to the Arab World countries. In most Arab regimes, people were not allowed to express their views or attitudes through the traditional media. Further, traditional media also had a very limited amount of freedom as they are mainly controlled by the states' authoritarian regimes. Therefore, the option for young activists was not to participate at all and remain suppressed during that era. Most young people in the Arab world have only known one president during their whole lives. This was the case in Egypt where Mubarak ruled for more than 30 years. The same applies to Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Syria and many other Arab countries.

Social media were very vital in giving power and strength to the protestors' and opposition movements. Most young political activists moved their activities and attitudes to online social media when they realized the advantages and facilities offered by these social media. At the same time, the Internet gave them the chance to produce and create information in an unprecedented manner.

The widespread use of social media led to a new type of protesting and “participation” in the virtual world. With the existence of social media, participation of young people and their involvement became subject to certain rules and criteria which include the following:

- Knowledge of the new activists: the frame of reference in the new virtual world is knowledge. Those young people who have the knowledge and information became the new leaders in the online world, and consequently in most cases, in the real world.
- Flexibility of interactivity: the social media allow for a flexible kind of interactivity which is characterized by easy and simple communication.
- Emotional investment: the social media use the new communication technology to mobilize emotions for the sake of protesting or raising specific causes.

Social media also became attractive to civil society associations as they allow coordination among social movements across borders without the need to follow the organizational structure. Social media can cause strong effects with a minimum amount of resources. At the same time, civil society can control the online editorial content with minimal interference or censorship from the state.

Young people in Egypt were not isolated from the new technology. They were very keen on the use of the Internet since 2002 when the Ministry of Communication launched a new initiative to provide a free Internet service for all Egyptians. According to an agreement signed between the Ministry of Communication and the Internet access providers, the Internet service was then available for all with the cost of normal telephone calls (30 percent of the call cost was for the Egyptian Company for Communication and 70 percent for the Internet access providers) (Morad, 2012, p. 76).

In 2004, the government launched the high-speed Internet service (ADSL). Ever since, Egypt became first among the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries with respect to the number of Internet users. Later on, social media became the most important media for communication among young people. Since 2004, the number of online young political activists and advocates of human rights increased rapidly and the role of social media has changed. They became important tools to mobilize young people against the misconduct and corruption of the government. Social media became important and effective tools for social mobilization because of the speed and efficiency which were not available through traditional media. For young Egyptian activists inside and outside Egypt, social media provided them with an opportunity to express their views, join groups and engage in discussions on current events and political issues. All these discussions paved the way for January 25th 2011 Revolution. During the events that occurred in the wake of January 25th revolution, the role of social media was significant. This role can be described as follows; social media:

- provided a free platform for discussion and exchange of ideas which was not available before due to the state's strict control over the traditional media in Egypt;
- made it easy to reach a large number of people and keep them engaged them in discussions around political issues;
- made it possible to participate in groups and discussion without the need to reveal one's identity. This was a very crucial issue in a time when the Egyptian authorities were paying close attention to political activists and when “Marshal Laws” were in evidence for many years (Chebib & Sohail, 2011, p. 140).

The role of social media in enabling Egyptian youth's political participation was prominently highlighted in April 2008. They created a page on Facebook to plan and organize a general strike of workers in textile factories in Al Mahla Al Kobra (North of Cairo) to protest against their low payments and the deteriorating working conditions. The strike, which was attended by more than seventy thousands protesters, was terminated by force of the security forces and the use of gas. It is worth noting that the number of the Internet users jumped from 1.5 million in 2004 to 13.6 million in 2008.

In 2009, a young Egyptian activist called Mahmoud Al Heeta, who was a university student, created a group on Facebook called “Al Baradei President for Egypt”. Tens of thousands of young Egyptians joined this group. This online group was transformed into a popular movement to support Mohamed Al Baradei to be the new president for Egypt. In April 2010, Wael Ghoneim, another young Egyptian activist, created a new page for Al Baradei. The number of subscribers in this webpage exceeded 100,000 and was mainly consisting of young people. When Al Baradei created his own page on Twitter, more than 10 thousands joined in a short period of time. (ibid)

In June 2010, Wael Ghoneim created another webpage on Facebook; “We are all Khaled Saeed” in the wake of killing Khaled Saeed; a young Egyptian from Alexandria, who was tortured to death by the police, with the aim of calling on people to rebel against police brutality and corruption. The page then expanded its activities and discussions to protest against the violation of human rights in Egypt, and the bad conduct of police. Subscribers of this page exceeded a quarter of a million in September 2010. These subscribers were all reporting news, exchanging information and sharing photos and video clips in support of an uprising. This page became stronger and more influential than any other medium or source of information in Egypt. At the time when the number of the page members reached 365 thousand, a call for street protests to rebel against injustice and police brutality was made (Masin, 2011, p. 19).

During the January 25th events, the Egyptian government resorted to shutting down the Internet and mobile phone connections from January 28th till February 1st, 2011. This action from the side of the government was a clear admission of the strength of social media and the Internet in mobilizing young people. Despite all these actions from the governments, the number of subscribers of the webpage (We Are All Khaled Saeed) jumped to 640,000 thousand. After January 25th, the number of Internet users in Egypt increased by 1.9 million reaching 23.1 million, and the number of Facebook users also increased by a million users reaching 5.2 million. The number of Twitter users jumped from 26.8 thousand to 44.2 thousand. More than 8.7 million web pages on Youtube were viewed during the last week of January 2011 (Lou, 2011, p. 2).

There is no doubt that social media play an important role in accelerating if not causing political changes in many countries. Of course, the poor living conditions for people, inequality, and widespread corruption in these countries were the main reasons for the uprising. Social media gave the chance to people to express their views and allowed new movements to emerge. Social media were very effective in directing the attention of young people towards political events and became important platforms for political movements. They also broke the feeling of fear and allowed people to express their views freely. Social media also played an important role in democratic movements that occurred in the Arab world and that resulted in the removal of heads of states in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen.

II. Concept and Development of Political Participation

Political participation is an important characteristic of modern societies as it plays an important role in achieving comprehensive development of society. It is also an important factor in modernization and political development. It is the mechanism through which political and social powers manage to present their plans and visions for developing society and influencing the process of decision making and the political activities of governments and officials.

Political participation is valuable when it manages to achieve changes and affect the public policy of the government. It is also a volunteer action which comes from a good belief of the individual that he/she is part of the political context and that he/she has a direct interest in supporting or opposing it. Not any political action may be seen as political participation unless it affects the public policy and the decision making process in the society. Therefore political participation includes a mutual interactive relationship between the individual and the political context. If the interaction does not occur, then it is not a real political participation.

The issue of political participation has been a substantive area of interest for both sociologists and political scientists, mainly because it pertains to the quintessential act of democratic citizenship, such as voting in elections for the parliament. While elections and

voting behavior attract the attention of many social science researchers, various manifestations and forms associated with political engagement in a broader sense have also received extensive study.

In the old days, political participation was confined to the elites, highly educated and wealthy people in society. The great majority of people were not politically involved. The situation has changed as from the renaissance age and during the industrial revolution during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More people became politically active. This may be due to some factors which include (Mothana, 2013):

- Writings of philosophers, intellectuals and journalists which called for and promoted values of equality, freedom and public interest to create more participation in the political life.
- Technological advances which led to the wide spread of ideas about democracy and more participation.
- More interference from governments which led to more direct influences on the daily lives of people.

The term “political participation” is a modern term. It was not broadly used, until the studies of Sidney Verba (1978), the American political scientist who was among the pioneers in the studies of political participation with the help of Norman Nie. According to them political participation involves the citizens speaking their minds and informing the government officials about their needs and concerns while exerting pressure on them in order for the governments to take action. This activity is done in a democratic state, where every citizen has the right to agree or disagree with everything that takes place in the public sphere. The citizens should be able to reach the governments and ask for their rights and the governments have to listen to them and respond (Eremenko, 2010).

The right to political participation refers to citizens’ right to seek to influence public affairs. The most notable actions that reflect political participation is expressed not only in voting in elections, but also in joining a political party, standing as a candidate in an election, joining a non-governmental advocacy group, or participating in a demonstration. As currently implemented by the United Nations, various operating entities assess

signatory states respect for this right and, when violations are determined to have occurred, may call on states to change their practices (Steiner, 1988).

Two foundational instruments define the right to political participation: the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Declaration) and the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Covenant). The Declaration is a statement of general principles. Since it is not a treaty, the standards of behavior that it defines have only the status of non-binding norms. But the document is nonetheless of enormous legal and political importance; for it provided the foundation not only for later legally-binding international treaties but also for many national governments rights frameworks.

Ratified almost three decades after the Declaration, the Covenant is similar to the earlier document in its content but enjoys the status of international law. As a binding treaty, the Covenant imposes some obligations on signatory states and includes some compliance mechanisms.

The right to participate is spelled out in similar language in the Declaration (Article 21) and the Covenant (Article 25). Article 25 of the Covenant states (ibid, 1988):

“Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without ... unreasonable restrictions:

To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections this shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.”

Political participation differs from one person to another; it also differs from a society to another. The various rules and systems can affect the types of political participation but at the end we all meet at one point which is the idea of participating. The participation also relies on the amount of understanding to the political system and the on-going situation. The historical background as well plays an influential role in forming the

peoples' behavioral acts and their way of thinking depending on the background they have (Eremenko, 2010).

Scholars distinguish four levels of individuals with respect to their relationship with the political regime (Mothana, 2013, p.15):

The first level consists of participants or activists. They must have at least three conditions of the following: membership in a political organization, giving donations for a political organization or a political candidate, attending political meetings regularly, taking part in electoral campaigns, sending messages to parliaments or government officials or the press with respect to political issues, and discussing political issues with individuals from outside his own close social circle.

The second level includes individuals who are interested in political activity or have a relation with some kind of political activity. This may include those who vote in elections and discuss public affairs and political developments in the society.

The third level includes individuals who are marginal when it comes to political activity. Those individuals are not usually interested in political activities and they do not devote any of their time or resources for political activities. They may participate in political activities only when they feel that their own personal interests are threatened or when they have some goals that they want to achieve from the participation.

The fourth level includes political extremists who practice their political activities outside the legal platforms. They may also use violence and riots and political assassinations and kidnapping of political figures.

Furthermore, Scholars argue that political participation may be defined by ranking some activities as follows (Mothana, 2013, p.18):

- 1- Talking about politics and the ability to persuade others.
- 2- Attending political and social conferences and gatherings.
- 3- Abiding by rules and laws and paying of taxes.
- 4- Approaching government officials or party members when facing a given problem.

- 5- Joining an organization that plays a secondary part in society.
- 6- Voting.
- 7- Joining a political institution.
- 8- Donating money for an electoral campaign.
- 9- Applying for a party or a governmental position.
- 10- Affecting the government's decisions.
- 11- Taking important political decisions.
- 12- Protests.

Consequently, actual political participation is not merely concerned with the process of voting, however, any activity that can influence the public sphere and interfere in the political life is considered a political participation. For instance such activities could be resembled in the attempt to be elected or to join a certain campaign, or even promote a certain candidate through the different media outlets. It could also be in the act of agreement or disagreement with the different policies. While electoral turnout and voting, which is the cornerstone of the democratic political process, has been reportedly decreasing over the last decades in almost all European states (O'Toole *et al*, 2003), academic experts and technocrats have been exploring alternative participation activities that could influence and shape decision-making processes, within a variety of social and cultural contexts.

The citizen can be a political participant in his society either through being a part of a certain group, non-governmental organization, party, campaign...etc. - or by his individualistic acts. Nowadays, a person can oppose the government's decisions by joining or donating for a certain cause, calling for a protest or even by signing a petition and trying to get reach of the officials

Eremenko (2010, p. 112) strongly confirmed that "citizen participation in political process is always not only the proclaimed right written in the Constitution, but also the personal willingness to participate." Thus, the attempt to volunteer in the political life and to keep fighting for one's right is a major factor that keeps the political participation on the right track.

Political participation results in improving the quality of life in societies. According to Weitz-Shapiro and Winters (2008): psychology research results suggest that generally humans desire to feel independent and efficient compared to their peers; consequently they resort to the processes that lead them to meeting such aspirations. Thus, people feel happy when engaging in certain process that can bring a satisfactory outcome. Political participation is one of the processes that is expected to increase the sense of happiness and satisfaction. It is expected to increase autonomy, relatedness and competence (Weitz-Shapiro & Winters, 2008).

There is also a focus on the psychological effects of political participation, through which politics can affect the psychological involvement of a person and lead to changes in his preferences. This may happen through exposing the public to political stimuli or involving them in a political discussion which can affect them and change their minds and their behavioral involvement. The media also play on the psychological side of the citizens, in an attempt to change their intended acts (Levin 2012).

Being a politically active person is very useful for the citizen and for the society he/she is living in. Through participation he/she can contribute in the decisions-making process and make a difference in his/her country. Political citizens have the chance to make a positive change and have the freedom to speak their minds. Their willingness to participate kills every fear and gives them feelings of strength and gratification.

There is no specific definition for political participation, but for example according to Huntington & Nelson political participation is a kind of activity in which the citizens can affect the decisions and actions of the government. This activity may be individual or collective, random or organized, peaceful or violent, legal or illegal, effective or non-effective. Other researchers have emphasized this meaning but they added that political participation could be direct or indirect either by the influencing of policy making or by the selections of those who make these policies. Both activities influence the actions of the government and impose the citizens' opinions (Caramani, 2000).

Political participation may be seen as one of the basic activities in any given democratic society. It is vital for laying the foundation for the democratic process as it

reflects citizen representation. It can also be seen as an indication of success or failure of the democratic process.

The most common form of political participation may be seen in elections which are important mechanism for democracy. Joining political parties, non-governmental organizations, lobbies and interest groups are also forms of political participation. Protests and demonstrations are also forms of political participation though the some sees them as negative forms of political participation (Ibrahim, 2010, pp. 144-145).

Practice of political participation relies mainly on the circumstances of society including political, economic, social and cultural climate. It also relies on the individual's ability and motivation and the opportunities offered by traditions and ideologies in society. Political participation is the end result of a set of social, economic, cultural, political and ethical factors. All these factors may determine the nature of society and its political system. They also determine the type of social and political relations and to what extent they match the participation which is the main characteristic of modern civil nations (Mekki, 2006, p. 65.).

Political participation is not a talent or an inherited characteristic, but it is a learnt skill which is earned by a human being. Political participation also develops and grows deeper throughout the different stages of lives of human beings and through their interaction with individuals, groups and institutions in the society. Political participation of young people relies mainly on their readiness and the chances they are given to do so. Despite the importance of political participation of young people, they are different with respect to degree of their political participation which varies mainly from one society to another (Shakfa, 2008, p.20).

Political participation may also be seen as the set of activities carried out by citizens in order to have a say in political issues and to affect the work of political institutions in a given society. Sometimes it is called mass or popular participation. All concepts are confined to the participation of individual in different social, political and economic affairs, in other words the direct participation in affairs of society.

Teorell (2006) on a threefold distinction between responsive, participatory and

deliberative models of democracy distinguished three conceptions of political participation: as influencing attempts, as direct decision making, and as political discussion. He argued that each of the three models is associated with different desired consequences of political participation: equal protection of interests, self-development and subjective legitimacy.

Quintelier & Van Deth (2014) investigated the relationship between political participation and political attitudes regarding fostering democratic engagement. Many authors simply presume that political attitudes reinforce political behavior. Using a three-wave panel data set with more than 3,000 adolescents, their findings show that political attitudes do not necessarily precede behavior. Findings also indicate that it is much more likely that political participation strengthens political attitudes than that attitudes trigger participation. This does not mean that attitudes are irrelevant to behavior, but the reverse impact is much stronger. More specifically, they found that the effects of being politically engaged on political interest, efficacy, confidence and norms of citizenship are clearly stronger than the effects of these attitudes on participation.

Political participation has some characteristics which may be summarized as follows (Aly, 2010, p.43):

- 1- Action: it means that the individuals are active in order to achieve a goal or a set of goals.
- 2- Volunteering: individuals act voluntarily. They do what they do with a strong feeling of social responsibility towards goals of their society and not according to any materialistic or moral pressure.
- 3- Selection: political participation gives the participants the right to offer support or opposition to the officials and governments and according to their real interests and legal goals.
- 4- Indefinite: political participation is not defined to a place or a time. It may be carried out on local, national or even regional levels.
- 5- Participation is a right and duty: political participation is a right and duty for every citizen. Everyone has the right and duty to take part in discussing issues

that are relevant to him/her and the society; he has the right to vote, to run as a candidate for a political post.

Importance of Political Participation

Political participation is important for establishing the democratic process in society. It expresses democracy; there is no democracy without political participation. The importance of political participation may be reflected through the following aspects (Azazi, 2008, pp.20-25):

- Political participation is an important form of education. Citizens learn through political participation their rights and obligations. Therefore, political participation is based on social responsibility which is based on finding the balance between rights and duties.
- Political participation is an important characteristic of democratic systems. The development of democracy depends, to a great extent, on the scale and range of participation and making it a right for every citizen.
- Political participation leads to more stability in society. Therefore, this leads to citizens' feelings of legality of the political regime as the participation gives the citizen the right to hold the rulers and responsible person accountable for their own deeds and actions. Individuals who are aware of the situations and correct issues are capable of correctly judging on the government's performance and policies. Political participation also reinforces the relationship between the individual and his own society which will be reflected on the individual's feeling of belonging and citizenship.
- Political participation also makes individuals more aware of problems in their societies and the available resources. This leads to a more constructive relationship between the citizen and governmental institutions.

- Real participation means that policies of the government are supported by the citizens' opinions. Participation also leads to individuals' organizing themselves and results in more collaboration

- Participation may lead sometimes to volunteering activities. It also helps to make citizens care for the public funds. This is a problem which exists in most developing societies where the public funds are subjected to abuse. It also helps to limit and decrease corruption. Political participation further leads to citizens' feelings that public fund consists of their own personal funds.

- Participation of citizens in the decision making process helps facilitate the execution of plans and programs. Citizens' acceptance of new plans or projects does not occur without their full participation; based on their full knowledge and awareness of these plans and projects and their values (Ghafar, 2009, p. 101-103).

- Participation also helps in strengthening citizens' relationship with the political regime and its goals. It also helps to increase the citizenship, locality and responsibility feelings. It also achieves social integration and helps to decrease the abuse of authority. Participation also can lead to equality and freedom. The importance of participation is not only about informing the governments with the needs of the citizens, but it also aims at influencing the behavior and attitudes of the ruling regime by keeping them well informed with the needs and priorities of the citizens so that they can work accordingly. Consequently, with the increase in the level of political participation, the more stable the society becomes and the better the realization of social, cultural and political conditions for the success of different development plans is (http://www.al-massar.com/ar_studies_detail.php?id=45).

Types of Political Participation

Scholars distinguish a few types of political participation. Political activities may be divided into conventional such as voting in general elections, and unconventional such as creating blogs online, or taking part in the online-political groups and establishing or taking part in protesting movements (Hegazy, 2009, pp.16-17).

Other scholars distinguish two types of political participation; formal and informal. The formal participation refers to participation in the political process through the governmental institutions and decision making centers. The informal participation may include participation through membership in political parties, lobbies and pressure groups. It may also be reflected in practicing the right of voting in general elections and taking part in electoral campaigns. It may also include expressing opinions and attitudes in the media or in meetings and public conferences (Omran, 1999, p. 125).

Some scholars see political participation as a three-fold process (Hegazy, op cit, p. 18). It includes the cognitive dimension, the value dimension and finally and the behavioral dimension.

- The first dimension includes the political knowledge and facts that a person has about different political topics as well as his awareness about different events, dates and political figures.
- Attitudes, tendencies and preferences dimension is linked to the values and believes of individuals. The individuals are keen to publish them in a given society so that these values may form the main component of all types of political, social and cultural relations in the society. This may be reflected on the individuals' attitudes and programs which they try to impose on political powers and policy makers.
- Practice of political participation includes all kinds of behavior; peaceful and legal activities which individuals may take and which will affect the decision making process and selection of political readers whether in a conventional or non-conventional way.

All three dimensions of political participation are affecting and being affected by each other. This relation indicates that political participation is a complex concept. It starts with political knowledge and then moves to political attitudes, tendencies and values which are translated into political activity/behavior. This political activity may be conventional such as voting in general elections or non-conventional such as creating of online blogs and establishing protest movements (ibid, p.18).

Another scholar, Milbrath (1966), presented a complete classification of political participation by presenting some types of political participation as follows:

- Declared and hidden political participation:

Political participation may be declared when a person talks about a political issue on TV or any other medium. It may also be hidden if a person does not want to declare it. He may send a letter to a political or a governmental official without mentioning his/her name in it for fear of being punished or hurt. This also applies when a person writes some political material online without mentioning his/her name or revealing their true identity.

- Close and remote participation:

The person may be positive in expressing his political views and here it is a close participation. This participation may be practiced as a remote participation if the individual decides not to declare or express his/her views.

- Seasonal and continuous political behavior:

Some political behavior may be in specific times such as voting in general elections. Other political behavior may be continuous and expanded such as membership of political parties.

- Political participation includes giving and taking:

Some kinds of political participation may represent a behavior of giving from the individual such voting or taking part in electoral campaigns. Other may take the forms of taking such as services, equality and security.

- Expressive and justifying behavior of individual:

Expressive political behavior is the behavior which is self satisfying, i.e. it satisfies some need for the individual as soon as he/she does it. Justifying political behavior is always linked to a goal and often aims at causing change.

- Verbal and non-verbal political behavior:

Most of activities of political participation require use of symbols. Other may need to use competences and persuasive skills.

- Social and non-social actions:

Some political actions require some skills from the person such as the communicative skills to reach the minds and hearts of voters. Other actions may not need these skills.

Highlighting how political participation can occur, Verba (1978) distinguishes 4 forms of political participation as follows:

- 1- Voting:

It is the most common form of participation. It is also the most measurable form. It represents some kind of group pressure on leaders and its results affect all citizens. Voting behavior is the citizens' behavior during period of competition or conflict as this process includes a competition and conflict among different powers. Voting times are not created by citizens but they are decided according to specific timetables and as consequences to other reasons or events occurring in a country.

- 2- Mobilization activities:

They are regular activities through which a citizen can influence officials. These activities are important as they clarify citizens' preferences with respect to specific policies. Here behavior is not individual as in the case of voting, but it is a collective behavior which requires collaboration and initiative from the citizens. This kind of activities affects the policy makers.

- 3- Societal activity:

This behavior includes the collective influence of citizens on decision makers. It includes two types; first the individual communication from citizens to governmental organizations regarding a specific political issue, and second non-partial cooperative activities related to group and organized trials

to deal with and raise social issues. Societal activities are done outside the frame of electoral process. However, they transfer a great amount of information to leaders and policy makers. The pressure here depends on the strength and influence of the groups in a society.

4- Communication to achieve a specific purpose:

This applies to individual's contacts with officials to present a certain problem or issue related to him/her or a member of his/her family. This form leads to less conflict among groups. Verba argues that this form of political participation is less significant than the previous three forms as it does not include a collective activity. It also lacks regular contacts between the citizen and political institutions though it has a great degree of initiatives from the individuals to influence political institutions and decision makers.

With respect to channels of political participation, scholars distinguish some important channels to carry out political participation (Aly, 2010, p. 34) which include:

1- Direct voting in elections:

Voting may be seen as one of the important methods of political participation as indicated above. This is linked directly to democracy which means that people practice authority through the free selection of their representatives. Though it is highly important, its real success depends mainly on some factors. The most important factor is the accountability of those representatives and the ability of the society to actually manage to hold them accountable and not relying on blind trust which may lead to a representative isolated from the people who selected him.

2- Participation in public referendum:

Most democratic regimes may use the public referendum to gain public support for a law, or an action. Some regimes may use this kind of participation in order to achieve certain social, political or economic goals or to make fundamental amendments to their constitution. That was the case in Egypt in November 2012 when people voted for constitutional amendment, and once more in January 2014 following the June 30th events.

3- Participation through public opposition:

As the citizens may be given the right, according to Constitution to oppose a certain law or rule which has been passed by the parliament during a certain period of time.

4- Participation through popular voting:

Herein the citizens may be given the right to suggest some proposals for laws then these proposals are presented for the concerned institutions for approval.

5- Participation by the demand to cancel results of elections:

Here the citizens may express their opposition to some elect representatives or high officials if they show any kind of lack of transparency. This may be carried out by direct legal and lawful proceedings.

6- Participation by using pressure methods:

This may be displayed through the rights of striking or demonstration to achieve political goals or civil disobedience or even violence against official institutions and its figures. This channel may be used when all other legal participation channels are not available or cannot be used. This channel is the most dangerous as it may lead to a full public refusal of the ruling political regime. This was the case during January 25th events in Egypt.

7- Participation through pressure lobbies:

When official channels for participation are not effective. It is important to indicate that a lot of these pressure lobbies which may work under the umbrella of political participation, represent certain category/class of people and not all the people. These lobbies may aim mainly at achieving political and economic goals of these groups. Israeli/Zionist lobbies in the USA may be seen as a good example for these pressure lobbies.

8- Participation through political parties:

Political parties are important cornerstone in democratic regimes. They are the most important institutions which give the political regime its democratic legacy.

9- Participation through civil society organizations:

Civil society is also an important player in the political process. Organizations such as women's association, students unions, professional syndicates, cultural and religious societies play important roles in pressurizing the government.

Though this is an important channel in many countries, the role of civil society in the Arab World is still considered very weak. This may be due to the failure of civil society organizations to address the minds and hearts of the people and consequently gain their support.

Young People and Political participation

Political participation in developing countries is facing some problems and obstacles. Most developing countries suffer from the wide spread of illiteracy and poverty. The crisis of political participation in the developing countries is also due to the need and desire of political regimes to maintain stability and continuity regardless of satisfaction of their own people (Mekki, 2006, p. 73). At the same time people in many developing countries are in need, and struggling to determine their self destiny. This crisis was reflected dramatically on the weak performance of political regimes. Most political participation channels are very weak and consequently political participation is not that strong or effective. Some scholars (Gabriel, 2005, pp. 23-24; Labeeb, 1992, p. 340) argue that the lack of participation in most developing countries goes back to some reasons which include:

- Social socialization which may lead to distance children from the political life. This kind of socialization is the most common in the Arab World. Children are raised up to obedience and they are not motivated to take part in political life. However, it is common in the Arab families that children are brought up to the love of the homeland.
- The political climate that surrounds the participation process and those who are interested in participation. There is no doubt that when the political power is in the hands of a certain class in the society, it always tries to keep and maintain it, by preventing any kind of political participation from citizens outside or who do not belong to this class. So, the ruling class usually puts obstacles and restrictions on political participation of people from outside this ruling class.

- Loss of people's trust in political systems adopted by the political regimes. This may be clarified in the differences between what they declare and what they do; speeches versus action. Pressure of difficult living conditions and economic circumstances, besides the emergence of new forms of consumption can also foster this loss of trust. This leads to individuals who are absorbed in their own life problems; struggling to maintain a good standard of living for themselves and their families.

- The feeling of being alienated can act as another reason that leads to the loss of incentive and motivation to become active political participants.

- Suppressive actions against opposition.

- Low levels of education and the wide spread of illiteracy especially in rural areas.

- Political parties are usually formed from elites and they may attract some others, but the majority of people prefer to stay outside this equation. Even if they join, their roles are always marginal.

- Fear of politics and authority may be another reason for lack of political participation. This fear is very clear in many Arab countries where people avoid participating in politics for fear of being hurt or punished.

- Some political models and organizations are adopted from the western countries. In most cases they do not suit the situation in developing countries (Mekki, op. cit., p.77).

Young people's political participation has long been a concern. Loss of community ties, little interest in and lack of knowledge of political processes, low levels of trust in politicians and growing cynicism of democratic institutions are often seen as indicators of the younger generations' weakened sense of citizenship and political engagement. This view is usually supported by making reference to low and declining levels of participation in traditional modes of political engagement such as voting and joining political parties (ibid).

However, young people tend to choose new forms of political participation. These

political actions are regarded as ‘new’ because they did not exist before the last decades (like for example participation via the Internet). Furthermore, researchers argue that some traditional forms of expression (e.g. demonstrations, protests, signing petitions, boycotts etc.) can be viewed as ‘new’ because young people attach new meanings to them and redefine their roles (Furlong and Cartmel, 2011).

The nature of political actions has changed significantly as they have become more individualized, ad-hoc, issue-specific and less linked to traditional societal cleavages. Through new forms of political participation, young people can feel that they influence political decisions more directly and effectively (Sloam, 2013). These changes in modes of political engagement are linked to new perceptions of citizenship. The patterns of socialization of today’s young people are considerably different from their parents’ generation, having been affected by the processes of globalization, individualization and rise of the new media (Bauman, 2009).

It is a well-known fact that young people vote less than older generations. According to the European Social Survey, in 2010, 61 percent of young respondents aged 22-29 stated that they voted in the last national elections, as opposed to the 78.1 percent of over 30-year-olds. However, as underlined above, young people political participation is not in decline it is in transformation (ibid).

Though elections have a pivotal role in democratic societies, it is not only voting that needs to be taken into account when evaluating political participation, there are many other ways of trying to influence political decision-makers and policies. Young people may vote less than older generations, but at the same time, they are over-represented in alternative, so-called ‘new’ forms of political participation. Based on Euro-barometer surveys conducted in 2012, this section looks at young people’s perceptions on different forms of political participation as well as how they actually choose to express their opinion on publicly important issues. Young people’s perceptions and behavior are contrasted with that of older age groups.

According to United Nation Development Programme (UNDP, 2012) Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle, the following may be pinpointed:

- Since the Arab Awakening many youth in the region have remained politically active through “political movements” instead of engaging with and in political parties. Young men and women are traditionally active politically in universities (when allowed) but very often disillusioned with political leadership and political institutions and excluded from policy development. As a result, political activism of youth is not organized according to formal groupings.

- Opportunities for youth to engage in governance and participate in political and decision-making processes depend largely on the political, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts where social norms in many parts of the world result in multiple forms of discrimination against young women.

- Both formal and informal engagement can be understood as political participation, and both are beneficial for a vivid and resilient democracy and should be supported. There is strong evidence that the participation of young people in formal, institutional political processes is relatively low when compared to older citizens across the globe. This challenges the representativeness of the political system and leads to the disenfranchisement of young people.

The family may also be seen as an important determinant of political participation of young people. Alesina & Giuliano (2011) established an inverse relationship between family ties and political participation; such that the more individuals rely on the family as a provider of services, insurance, and transfer of resources, the lower is one's civic engagement and political participation. They also showed that strong family ties appear to be a substitute for generalized trust, rather than a complement to it. These three constructs - civic engagement, political participation, and trust - are part of what is known as social capital; therefore, in their paper, the researchers contributed to the investigation of the origin and evolution of social capital. They established these results using within-

country evidence and looking at the behavior of immigrants from various countries in 32 different destination places.

It is clear that the family ties in Egypt and other Arab countries are strong. This, according to argument of Alesina (2011) may be seen, as one of the reasons for the lack of political participation among young people.

Social Media and Political Participation

One of the main functions of social media is to allow people to exchange ideas, easily and quickly which reinforces communication and interactivity among members of a social network. Social networks also enable members to use different media such as pictures, videos and programs. The discussions and exchange of ideas may urge members to work in the “real world”. Findings of previous studies have shown that lack of political participation of young people might sometimes be due to their decreased use of media and exposure to news (Raeymaecker, 2002, p. 369).

Though social media were not meant to be sources of news and information in the beginning, they were mainly tools for social contacts, more than half the users of young people, may use them as a sources of political information. Social media were also used to obtain information on candidates, which might help them in the voting process (Ellison, 2007, p.1153).

Despite the fact that young people’s use of traditional media decreased, their use of the Internet and social media is skyrocketing. This might be one of the reasons that can result in more politically active youngster. In developed countries, it was found that youth who use media more tend to be more politically active. This becomes obvious in voting and other forms of political participation (Lance, 2011, p.1).

According to Zhang and his colleagues (2010) many scholars find the area of studying social media as interesting and significant. However, research that has been recently conducted on social media mainly studies the characteristics of users and their usage patterns. Not many studies investigated the role of social networking sites in making

citizens engaged in the democratic process. The mentioned scholars conducted a study on Southwest residents through telephone survey. The study investigated the degree to which citizens' engagement in political or civic activities is relevant to depending on social media; including YouTube, MySpace and Facebook. The study focused on examining how far social networking sites can actually impact "political attitudes and democratic participation". According to the findings social networking sites usage is highly relevant to civic participation while interpersonal discussion was found to strengthen and support political and civic participation.

Undoubtedly, when investigating the political participation, one cannot neglect the effect and the important role of social media. In the 2008 U.S. Presidential Elections, social network sites such as Facebook allowed users to share their political beliefs, support specific candidates, and interact with others, discussing political issues. But do political activities on Facebook affect political participation among young voters, a group traditionally perceived as apathetic in regard to civic engagement? Or do these activities represent another example of feel-good participation that has little real-world impact, a concept often referred to as “slacktivism” i.e. online participation only without any real-life participation.

- Technology and Politics

New technologies are becoming increasingly common to the creation, circulation, and reception of political messages. The relationships between conceptions of citizenship and media technologies are a vital space of inquiry (Baldwin-Philippi, 2012). Research related to the intersection of technology and politics is rapidly growing, and has provided much insight into voters' patterns of technology use and the content of campaigns' messages across media technologies, but the ways that digital tools and their content are tied to the norms of political participation and citizenship with political texts remain unanalyzed. Baldwin (ibid) investigated how political campaigns are using digital media to create and circulate campaign messages, and how these digital messages articulate norms and definitions of participatory citizenship that are currently functioning within a contemporary democratic public.

- A Prominent Role for Social Media in the Arab Spring

Following of news of political issues in the media may also be seen as a form of political participation. Therefore, media in general and social media in particular, became important channels which can help to empower young people for political participation. Social media played important roles in the events which took place in the Arab World as from late 2010 and during 2011, the so called "Arab Spring". Some studies dealt with the role of social media in pushing the popular uprisings. Scholars were divided among themselves about the role played by these social media in these events (Fadeel, 2006, p. 6-7). At the same time, they are in agreement on the role that social media have played in causing these changes in the area. This role was clear with the great majority of youth in the Arab World and the increase use of social networking sites.

"Facebook" was the shrine from which calls for demonstrations spread widely in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya. It was an important medium for mobilization of civic movements. However, the role of Facebook varies from one country to the other, while it was very widely effective in Egypt, it was less in Yemen and Syria where the Internet connection is poorer (O'Neill, 2010, p. 43). In the Arab Spring movements, social media were a good source of information and a platform to express and exchange political views. The role of social media will apparently continue to foster's youth political engagement.

Egyptian Youth and Political Participation

Young people in Egypt were active in using the new media for political discussion as from the turn of the 21st century. The new media acted as a unique platform for political discussions and digital protests among the youngster. The new media were indeed encouraging young people to be more politically active. The number of bloggers increased rapidly. At the same time, their blogs and exchanged comments have shown a great deal of dissatisfaction about the political, economic and social conditions in the country. These bloggers were also very critical of the abuse of the police during Mubarak's era. The new media were very useful and effective in organizing efforts of the

Egyptian youth. Egyptian bloggers could claim that they were the first to criticize Mubarak's regime openly. As from 2004 bloggers began to move from the virtual world to the real world, protesting in the streets of Cairo and other governorates (Al Malky, 2007). The formation of “Kefaya” and other political movements were also supported by these bloggers. One may claim that these were actually some kind of political participation which was not in existence before.

These young bloggers were also brave enough to disclose a lot of misconducts, torture and brutality of police when dealing with citizens whether in prisons or elsewhere. At this point in time, street protests became more frequent than ever. This represented a new form of political participation which was not practiced before. It also marks the beginning of the real political participation of Egyptian youth.

While none of these activities were known neither to local rights organizations nor to international rights advocates like Amnesty International, it was Egyptian bloggers, writing in the distinctive local dialect of Egypt, who were most responsible for publicizing these issues, bringing them into the public sphere, and transforming them into legitimate issues for public debate (El Mahdi, 2009).

Social media were the main platform for organizing street protests and demonstrations. It is well known that the initial protests of January 25th, 2011 were scheduled on police day to show objection and dissatisfaction of the police behavior. The protesters were also criticizing the back then Minister of Interior Habib El-Adly who was in power as a minister for more than 13 years. The protests represented a kind of a challenge to the lawlessness of the country's police and security forces.

Credit for planning these protests has been variously attributed both to April 6th Movement (which originally began as a Facebook group in March 2008), and to the “We Are All Khaled Said” Facebook group, which was founded after the appalling murder by a police officer of a young man from Alexandria named Khaled Said in June 2010. The founding of April 6th Youth Movement in 2008, and “We Are All Khaled Said” Facebook group marked the beginning of the real political participation of young Egyptians. It is

also because of the spread of and changes in the usage patterns of social media that political participation emerged vigorously.

III. Review of Previous Studies

Before going into studies that tackle the direct impact of new media on youth's political participation, it is important to understand the reason why such platforms managed to have a strong impact. Generations of young people need to unite on common causes in order to be able to have attitudinal or behavioral changes toward their countries or regimes. This is exactly what social media have done: they helped youth "develop a consciousness of their common interests and form group solidarity to harness their collection power" (Herrera, 2012). According to Klatch (1999) significant changes in the lives of generations occur most strongly in cases where a "social trauma" exists, such as during economic crises or times of political and social revolutions. According to Edmunds and Turner (2005) the new media can act as important resources to youth for empowerment:

"Generations shift from being a passive cohort...into a politically active and self-conscious cohort...when they are able to exploit resources (political/educational/economic) to innovate in cultural, intellectual or political spheres" (Herrera, 2012).

This strongly applies to today's young generation which is regarded as a media-savvy one that manages to master the idea of "online to offline organizing" for purposes that directly have to do with a country's political life. Revolts that took place in what is dubbed the 'Arab Spring' are good examples and then movements that took place in New York City (Occupy Wall Street) and then in Spain (Los Indigados movement).

The term "Facebook revolution" has been widely circulated in the media on a global level. This came as a result of the Egyptian revolution being mainly triggered by Facebook page "We Are All Khaled Saeed". The page was initiated after Khaled Saeed, a young Egyptian, was killed by police officers. The page was developed in order to

spread awareness and encourage people to rage on "police brutality". The page has always been action-oriented ever since it encouraged its members "to get up from behind their computer screens and go out into the streets...to attend the public funeral of Khaled Said" (Herrera, 2012). By time the page started calling people to take to the streets and revolt against tyranny, the 30-year-old autocratic regime, torture and social injustice on January 25th, the number of its members was massively increasing.

Such events pull attention to the true impact of social media on youth in general. Consequently, studies from different countries in this specific area are necessary to get a broader view of the issue.

In order to be able to pinpoint new areas that can add to the body of knowledge in the chosen topic and to highlight the significance of the topic, a review of previous studies and literature in the same area of study should be done. Therefore, this section will deal with previous studies carried out in Egypt and different parts of the world. Previous studies are presented chronologically, starting with the latest. The presented studies are also divided into two sub-sections; studies carried out in the Arab World and studies carried out in other countries.

Studies carried out in the Arab World

Al Aqad (2014) carried out a study on role of social media in supporting political engagement of Palestinians youths. The study was carried out on a sample of 382 students in Ghaza Strip. Findings of the study have indicated that 95 percent of the respondents were using social networks. Facebook came in first place as the most used site. It was followed by YouTube and Forums. The most used forms were messages, chatting, and video exchanges. The most mentioned motivation for using the social sites were searches for information, and expressing opinions and attitudes freely. More than half the respondents indicated that they use the social sites for political participation, and half of them really took part in real political activities. Social media were also used intensively to present the Palestinian crisis and seek support for it. The Prisoners in

Israeli prisons also took a great deal of online political discussions. Social media also allowed Palestinian youth to contact their friends and relatives who live abroad.

Khalifa (2014), in his study on the role of social media in reinforcing citizenship values, found that 90 percent of the respondents used social network. The study was carried out on a sample of 360 Palestinian university students from Gaza. The main objective for using social sites was to seek news and information. Issues related to citizenship were also among the important discussion topics online. Traditional media were also important sources of information for some of them. Most respondents agree on the importance of allowing student to use the Internet in the university.

In his study, Mothana (2013) examined the role of social media in encouraging political participation of Yemeni young people. The study was carried out on a sample of 400 university students. Findings have shown that most of them were using the Internet heavily and Facebook was the most used social site. Social media were also mentioned as the most important source of information for most respondents. It was also mentioned by most respondents that the social media were important platforms for political discussion and exchange. Though social media in Yemen were used initially for social reasons, they became important platforms for political discussions. The main motivations for these discussions were demand for reforms and political change. Facebook was also the most mentioned medium for organizing protests and demonstrations in the streets.

Al Asdoudy (2012) carried out a study on the role of social networks on Egyptian students' perception of freedom of opinion and their political participation. The study relied on content analysis of the webpage of "We Are All Khalid Saeed" and a survey which was carried out on a sample of 400 university students. The findings of the study have shown that there were some differences between attitudes of heavy users of social media and less frequent users. Heavy users were more politically active and can be considered participants in real life than others.

Another study on the role of social media in mobilizing public protest movements reached similar findings (Alia, 2012). The study aims at examining characteristics of social networking sites and the most common issues and topics discussed on them. The

study was carried out on a sample of 200 selected from those who took part in the Tahrir Square demonstrations in January 2012, in the celebration of the first anniversary of January 25th revolution. The study found that more than 70 percent of the respondents participated because they were motivated by participating in discussions online especially on Facebook. The respondents indicated that the most important characteristic of this social medium was the direct and fast transformation of events. The main reasons for using social media were seeking information and determining locations and places where protests and demonstrations will be held. The respondents also mentioned a few reasons for their participation in the protests which included: feelings of injustice, defending a principle and feelings of responsibility.

In his study carried out on a sample of 400 university students examining their use of the new media and the gratifications they obtain, Khalil (2012) found that more than half the respondents (56 percent) indicated that they use the social networks on a daily basis. Facebook was the most used site in order to take part in organization demonstrations on January 25th. The most discussed topics were political topics.

Al Kandari and Hasanen (2012) carried out a study on the effect of the Internet on political behavior of people in Kuwait and Egypt. The study was carried out on a sample of 445 persons; 242 from Egypt and 203 from Kuwait. Findings of the study have shown that the most used Internet sites were the social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Blogs where people were seeking information and using them as forums for free expression. People who used Facebook and Twitter were more involved in politics than others. It was also found that social media played a vital role during January 25th events in Egypt. They were used heavily by young people for the exchange of ideas and discussions and by political activists for sending news feeds. The study also concluded that despite the fact that social media were effective in Egypt and Tunisia, in Libya they were not that effective.

In her study on how the social media sites can create a public sphere that might enhance political participation, El Hussein (2011) found that political participation is a pre-requisite for democracy. Her findings indicate that there is a relationship between political discussion online and the real political activities. The study also found that there

was a positive relationship between the online and offline participation. It was found that the use of online social network sites for political reasons was also statistically related to the offline civic engagement such as volunteering for community service tasks after working hours, and contacting governmental officials to solve communal problems. Social network sites were also found to be important sources of political information such as information about political candidates and their attitudes.

Findings have shown that there is some effect from Facebook on political participation which is mainly informational. Findings have also shown that there is a positive relationship between the use of Facebook for political purposes and general political participation. However they also discovered a strong negative relationship between using Facebook heavily (intensity of usage) and general political participation. They try to explain it saying that the most intense users of Facebook are classic “slacktivists,” meaning that they do not translate their political activities on the site into other more commonly valued forms of real political participation.

Fatah (2011) carried out a study on bloggers in Egypt to examine the relationship between online blogs and political participation. Findings show that Egyptian bloggers are always interested in influencing their readers/others and are prepared for participation. Interviewed bloggers felt that the weak political participation may be due to the hardships of life. Most respondents also indicated that Egypt lacks transparency, equality and justice. Bloggers also felt that there was no effective role for them in society and their role was restricted to talking and discussing, what is dubbed “fadfada” in slang.

In a study carried out by Al Nashmi *et al* (2010), on the content of blogs and online political discussions in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, findings have shown that political issues were the most discussed topics in the studied sample. The study relied on content analysis. Based on their findings, most Arabs regarded the Internet as a significant platform which can help to achieve political change. Discussions related to social issues such as education, the situation of woman, ethnic groups and health care were tackled less than others. Findings have also shown that in Kuwait, most discussions were focused on elections, candidates, legislative council in addition to some economic issues. In Saudi Arabia issues related to religion; "Sunni" and "Shiite" differences were

most prominent. In Jordan, political discussions were mainly about the Arab-Israeli conflict, the difference between " Hamas " and " Fath " and the problem of Palestinian refugees in Jordan. In Egypt, most discussions were concerned with criticizing the president, and government policies on different issues, such as education and health care. Interestingly, the study found that online discussions in Egypt were more rational than other countries. Generally speaking, Arabs were strongly critical of their governments. Hopes for political reforms were prominent, but words such as " revolution " or " removal of political regimes " were rarely used at the time (Al Nashmi *et al.*, 2010).

Studies Carried Out in Other Countries

According to findings of a study conducted by Wilson and Tukfeki (2012), social media were very important tools in organizing and planning demonstrations during the January 2011 events in Egypt. In their study of a sample of young people who took part in the demonstrations in Tahrir Square (Egypt) for a period of two weeks in February 2011. Their findings have shown that the social media presented new media and new sources of information and news that the old regime could not control. They also found that the social media such as Facebook and Twitter played a crucial role in organizing demonstration which led to the toppling of Mubarak on February 11th, 2011.

Vesnic-Alujevic (2012) carried out a study on political participation and Web 2.0 in Europe. It was a case study on Facebook. The study was conducted on a sample of 361 participants over 18 years old, from all countries of the European Union. It was aimed mainly at investigating the role of Facebook in political participation in Europe. Findings have shown that the Facebook help to transfer information not only to policy makers, but also to ordinary people in all countries.

According to Wojcieszak (2012) the Internet in general and Twitter in particular have significant roles as main sources of information to Iranian youth. The study was carried out on a sample of 2800 young Iranians and relied on an electronic survey. Findings have shown that 89 percent of the respondents mentioned that they use the Internet as their main source of information and news, followed by television (56 percent), with seventeen

percent of the respondents indicating they use Twitter mainly for political discussions. Most respondents mentioned that new media play an important role in their empowerment and encouragement for political participation. These findings were also supported by Baker and Devreese (2011) which added that traditional media were less effective in encouraging political participation of young people.

In a study on the reasons for young people's use of Facebook, Christy and her colleagues (2011) examined factors that motivate young people to use Facebook. The study was carried out on a sample of 182 users of the Facebook, aged 19 to 23 years. Findings have shown that most students use the Facebook to get quick information and news and to stay in contact with their friends. It was also found that the Facebook helps users to learn more about the current issues, political parties and issues. Males were using the Facebook more than females and it was also found that the students spend a great deal of their time on Facebook and that was a negative aspect of it. Facebook was also criticized for having some photographic material which is against societal ethics and values.

In their study on effects of the use of Facebook on political participation of young people during the presidential elections of 2008, Vitak and his colleagues (2011) tried to investigate the potential relationship between political activities people engage in on Facebook, and their political activities in general. The study was carried out on a random sample of 400 undergraduate students and relied on a telephone survey.

In a study carried out on Korean teenagers' political participation in the information age, Seongyi and Woo-Young (2011) found that new media are significantly influential. A case study was carried out on the "2008 Candlelight Protest of Korea". Findings have shown that the Internet and social media were the main sources of information and acted as vital media for planning and organizing demonstrations. It was also found that Korean teenagers consider the Internet as the most trustworthy source of information, and turned it to a platform that fosters political discussions. It was noted that females were more involved in online activities than males, which is unusual in a male-centered Asian society.

Christensen (2011) carried out a study on the impact of online political activities on offline (real life) political activities and on guiding decisions of young people. The study examines a hypothesis that suggests that online political activity can replace real life political participation. The study finds this hypothesis unsupported: people's online political activities cannot replace their traditional political participation. It found that new media use has a positive impact on young people's political participation as a result of the increased number of Internet users and blogs as well. Findings have also shown that new media increase people's awareness of political issues and might also mobilize them to practice real life political activities out of the virtual world, which are a vital part of political participation.

These findings were supported by Virginia and Wright-Phillips (2010) by emphasizing that new media users and those who count on it as a main source of information tend to be more active political participants. According to their study, they were also more proactive in taking part in voting during elections.

Budek (2010), in his comparative study between the roles of new social media and traditional media in encouraging people to vote in elections, found that traditional media - newspapers, radio and television - were important sources of information. The study was carried out on a sample of 2254 persons. It was also clear that the roles of Facebook and Twitter were less effective than those of traditional media in encouraging people to participate in the voting process; despite the important role of Facebook and Twitter during the 2008 presidential elections.

According to Borge and Cardenal (2010), the suggestion that the use of the Internet has a direct impact on youth's political participation is supported. But the study also adds that as long as the Internet user has the skills and experience he/she will take part in different political activities. This was supported by O'Neil (2010), whose study found that there is a direct relation between high standard of living and political participation. Individuals who are highly educated are more likely to have the knowledge and skills to use the new media and so become more involved in the political life. This highlights the idea of the digital divide, suggesting that new media empowerment for a segment of

youth in a country can lead to marginalization of another segment (the uneducated and Internet illiterate).

Hays (2009) carried out a study on the new media and the role of social media in encouraging political participation of young people. The study was carried out on a sample of 625 university students aged 18 to 25 years. Findings of the study have shown that students were politically involved on social websites where they would discuss and talk about political candidates. It was also observed there was an active interaction among students about the political candidates. The traditional media were also mentioned as important sources of political information. The study also concluded that there was a strong correlation between the use of social networks and the level of political awareness. It was also concluded that the social media were important media for political learning.

Studies that were done on students' online and offline political involvement also supported the direct relationship between new and social media use and political participation. For example Kushin *et al.* (2009) carried out a study on a sample of American students which showed that the use of online political content had an impact on their voting behavior and decisions in the presidential elections of 2008. Makarim (2009) supported this in a study done on a sample of 400 university students. The study also found that new media use encouraged students to become politically active in terms of joining political parties, voting in elections and participating in political discussions.

Despite the fact that many studies have supported the impact of social media on youth's political participation, an interesting question that is raised is what the effect is like: is it short term or long term? According to Herrera (2012, p. 337):

"Online political activity on Facebook is mostly about "short-term, single-issue campaigns. These campaigns can activate feelings of citizenship, start conversations, build coalitions, get people to the streets and even trigger revolutions".

Based on the previous studies, a conclusion can be drawn: the new "social" media have a significant role in encouraging and empowering youth to be politically active.

Applying this to Egypt, some areas need to be examined further. It remains unclear whether youth regard new media as a credible source of information, whether they count on it more than traditional media for news, the reasons why they might do so, the extent to which it enhances their political participation in terms of directing their behavior to seek their common interest, and the impact of it on their decision making (voting, joining or campaigning for political parties), their awareness of political issues and their participation in online political activities, as well as offline ones such as engaging in strikes, demonstrations or sit-ins.

Also questions arise as to the effect model that applies to new media's impact on Egyptian youth's political participation: is it short term behavioral (causes or issues oriented) or long term attitudinal (cultivating the notion of citizenship and political responsibility). This will clarify the extent to which new media aid in the process of democracy building.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

Over the past decade, the world has been witnessing an unprecedented phenomenon of effortless accessibility to information, rapid communication and a wide range of services, thanks to the Internet.

Consequently, the emergence of social media through websites such as Facebook and Twitter acted as attractive platforms for many youth in the Arab world. Through these platforms the youngster found their way to becoming more strongly represented through expressing opinions, sharing comments and posts with peers in society, and creating their own content. This led to the role of social media massively turning from merely being driven by the audiences' desires to socialize and network with friends, to citizens' demands to be better represented by actually participating in and impacting political life. A lot of citizens found social media to be an influential platform through which they could become more politically active and through which they could mobilize the masses to engagement.

Egypt, as one of the most heavily populated Arab countries with more than 86 million citizens, has been witnessing a rapid increase in Internet use. The number of Internet users in Egypt has increased from only 300,000 users in 2000 to 10.5 million users in 2008 to reach 21 million users in 2011 (Tayie, 2012). Most of the Internet users in Egypt range from eighteen to thirty-five years old; 52 percent of them have computers access and are Internet literate (Herrera, 2012). This leads to an issue that is increasing in importance with the increasing numbers and percentages of Internet users: the digital divide. These figures show that Egyptian youth are strongly involved in the Internet and digital platforms; however, still there is a huge percentage of people in Egyptian society who are excluded as a result of poverty and illiteracy. According to Herrera and Bayat (2010), youth with access to the Internet still have an effect on their colleagues and do motivate changes in their generations that have political as well as cultural results.

This has been most prominent during the “Arab Spring” in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen. In the wake of the Tunisian revolution, Egyptians' calling for a democratic rule turned into a reality when millions took to the streets on January 25th Revolution toppling a 30-year-old autocratic regime. This was later followed by another wave of the revolution on June 30th, when Egyptians managed to topple another one-year-old political regime; the Muslim Brotherhood's.

In light of this, this study aims at examining the impact of social media on young Egyptians through investigating their usage patterns while shedding the light on their motives behind using social media and the extent to which such motives are met. Further, the fact that social media provide a platform through which youth interact with peer citizens leading to youth empowerment and encouragement for political participation as a vital stage in the transition to democracy in Egypt is examined.

According to Conge (1988, p. 241), the definition of political participation can be categorized as the following:

"Active versus passive forms: Should political participation be defined in terms of action – voting, campaigning for a political party – or should it include passive forms – a feeling of patriotism, an awareness of political issues?"

"Aggressive versus Non-aggressive Behavior: should the definition embrace civil disobedience and political violence, or should it be limited to more "conventional" activities"

"Mobilized versus Voluntary Actions: should behavior sponsored and guided by the government to enhance its well fare be called political participation, or should the term be confined to behavior initiated by citizens in pursuit of their interests?" .

For the sake of this study political participation refers to "behavior initiated by citizens in pursuit of their interest", "voting, campaigning to a political party", and having an enhanced "awareness of political issues, engaging in strikes, demonstrations or sit-ins. (ibid).

The study is developed under the Uses and Gratifications Approach. According to the Uses and Gratification Approach, media play an important role in giving the audience certain gratifications, and consequently have an impact on them.

In the following section, Uses and Gratifications Approach will be discussed.

Uses and Gratifications

Uses and gratifications is a significant and influential approach in media research. This theory focuses mainly on the reasons which lead people to use and consume media. In contrast to the common concern of the 'media effects' tradition with 'what media do *to* people' (which assumes a homogeneous mass audience and a 'hypodermic' view of media), uses and gratifications approach can be seen as part of a broader trend amongst media researchers which is more concerned with 'what people do *with* media', allowing for a wide variety of responses and interpretations. However, some scholars have argued that gratifications could also be seen as effects: e.g. thrillers are likely to generate very similar responses amongst most viewers. Roots of the Uses and Gratifications approach go back to the 1940s (MaQuail, 1987). A study carried out by Berelson (1949) was among the first traditional studies in the area of uses and gratification. Findings of this study have shown that although the daily newspaper is simple in its functions, it is very important for readers. When it is not available, it causes some disturbance to the readers' routine of daily life; its disappearance annoys them.

A lot of modifications were introduced to Uses and Gratifications during the 1970s and 1980s. The emergence of computer-mediated communication has revived the importance and significance of Use and Gratifications Theory. In fact, Uses and Gratifications approach has always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communications medium: newspapers, radio and television, and now the Internet. Although scientists are likely to continue using traditional tools and categorization to respond to some inquiries about media use, according to Ruggiero (2000), "we must also be prepared to expand our current

theoretical models of uses and gratifications. Contemporary and future models must include concepts such as interactivity, demassification, hypertextuality, and asynchronicity; researchers must also be willing to explore interpersonal and qualitative aspects of mediated communication in a more holistic methodology” (Ruggiero, 2000: 28). It was also clear from recent studies that young people obtain many gratifications from their use of the new media (Raake & Raake, 2008).

Uses and gratifications approach is derived from a functionalist paradigm in the social sciences. It mainly presents audience’s use of the media in terms of the gratification of individual’s social or psychological needs (Blumler & Katz 1974). There are a few sources of gratifications for the individual’s needs. Mass media compete with other sources of gratifications. Gratifications can be obtained from the content of the medium (e.g. watching a specific program), from familiarity with a genre within the medium (e.g. watching soap operas), from general exposure to the medium (e.g. watching TV), and from the social context in which it is used (e.g. watching TV with the family) (Blumler *et al*, 1970: 245).

Accordingly, Uses and Gratifications theorists argue that people use and respond to the media content according to their needs. Zillmann (cited by McQuail 1987: 236) has shown the influence of mood on the selection of media content: for instance boredom encourages the choice of exciting media content and stress encourages a choice of relaxing content. Gratifications obtained from the same television program may vary according to different needs of individuals. Needs may also vary from one person to another according to some criteria such as individual personalities, maturation stage, backgrounds and social roles. Developmental factors seem to be related to some motives for purposeful viewing: e.g. Judith van Evra (1990: 177-179) argues that young children may be particularly likely to watch television programs in search of information and hence more susceptible to influence.

Blumler & Katz (1974) argued that audience needs have social and psychological origins which generate certain expectations about mass media. This leads to differential patterns of media use which result in both the gratification of needs and in other (often

unintended) consequences. This does assume that audiences are believed to be active audience making motivated choices and also making meaning of the consumed content, i.e. the media content they select.

McQuail suggests that the dominant stance of recent researchers in this tradition is now that:

“Personal social circumstances and psychological dispositions together influence both... general habits of media use and also... beliefs and expectations about the benefits offered by the media, which shape... specific acts of media choice and consumption, followed by.... assessments of the value of the experience (with consequences for further media use) and, possibly... applications of benefits acquired in other areas of experience and social activity.” (McQuail, *ibid*: 235).

Recent studies have shown that the gratifications obtained from the media may be around two main areas (Klapper, 1960): the first is "emotional release"; this area refers to individual feeling better after exposure to the media content. This is due to the identification of individuals with the personalities in the media. They seem to see themselves; their characters and circumstances reflected in some kind of identical conditions of the displayed personalities in the program. The second area is "school of life"; for example, a lot of women learn from television programs how to deal with life problems and situations.

Furthermore, Denis McQuail (McQuail 1987: 73) offers the following categorization of common reasons for media use:

Information; this category refers to: gaining knowledge about happenings in one's environment, society and the world, pursuing others opinions or advices in order to help in decision making, corresponding to one's being curious and interested to know, "learning; self-education", obtaining a feeling of being more secure through knowledge

Personal Identity; this category refers to: finding support for a person's beliefs and values, knowing about different models of behavior, "identifying with valued other (in the media)", and "gaining insight into one's self"

Integration and Social Interaction; this category refers to: having social empathy through gaining insight into circumstances of others, gaining a sense of belonging through identifying with others; "finding a basis for conversation and social interaction", "having a substitute for real-life companionship", helping to carry out social roles, and enabling one to connect with family, friends and society

Entertainment; this category refers to: escaping, or being distracted, from problems, relaxing, "getting intrinsic cultural or aesthetic enjoyment", filling time, emotional release, and "sexual arousal"

Recent studies have indicated that users of the social media seek to obtain specific gratifications. Pornsakulvanich *et al* (2008) found in their study on the gratification obtained from using the new media that those who used the internet are mainly seeking self-fulfillment, affection and desire to speak out their feelings to others. Findings have shown that the respondents felt satisfied with their online communication which fulfills the above needs. The same kind of gratifications was also found by other recent studies (Meiling & Remus, 2014). In another study (Quan-Haase and Young, 2010) it was found that the most common reasons for using the social media were filling time, affection, fashion, sharing problems, sociability and seeking social information.

The uses and gratifications approach is based on some theoretical principals. Some scholars talk now about the intervening variables which may affect the influence of the media on people. Recent studies indicate that there is a relation between the gratifications obtained from the media and the effects of the mass media (Rubin, 1985). Uses and gratification approach has also helped a lot to develop the mass communication research especially with the active view of the audience (Swanson, 1987: 237).

Chapter Four

Methodology

Significance of the Study

The relationship between the Internet and civic engagement has been debated both in the public realm and among scholars. Many commentators expected the Internet to have a profound impact on how democracy functions, transforming it into an ideal e–democracy with equal opportunities for all citizens.

During the 1990s, many often claimed the Internet would offer new ways of presenting one's political message and views. Today, with the advent of Web 2.0, the Internet-or new media- are said to offer a platform that triggers political participation. Over the last few years, scholars have paid a lot of attention to the studies of youth and new media. Despite the fact that the number of studies in the area of social media and political participation has been accelerating, further research and special attention still needs to be paid to countries like Egypt.

According to Herrera (2012, p. 334), the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries are of great significance to research in this area. The MENA countries represent communities of "wired youth" suffering from "political repression and economic exclusion" which act as a huge challenge that stands as an obstacle in the process of transitioning to democracy. With the increase in the numbers of Internet users, social injustice and lack of political representation increases as well under autocratic regimes. This acts as a strong justification to study and understand the notion of new media empowerment for youth in the MENA countries. There was a remarkable increase that occurred between 2008 and 2011, in which numbers increased from 822,560 Facebook users in 2008 to reach more than 5.6 million in 2011.

Recent statistics (Al Gazzar, 2013, p. 15) show that there is a massive growth in the number of Egyptian users of social media. The number of Facebook users is estimated now at 13,010,580 users. This represents 16.2 percent of the population, putting Egypt in the 20th place in the ranking of the countries that use Facebook. Facebook users represent 60 percent of the online sites users. Most Facebook users are aged between 18 and 24 years followed by the age group of 25 to 34.

This leads to the fact that since the January 25th Revolution, emphasis has been given to the role of the Internet generally and social media specifically in shaping and enhancing youth's involvement in the political life. This was particularly obvious when the government decided to shut the Internet off during the eighteen days of the first wave of the revolution.

The study will focus on these areas with special attention to examining the extent to which citizen created content on social media highlights issues of common concern impacting their obtrusiveness to their peer citizens as a result of satisfying their needs. This reflects citizens' representation and empowerment which, of course, acts as a crucial step to democracy building. The study sheds the light on the extent to which social media provide a platform through which citizens share their common concerns that result in collective real-life actions that can possibly define political participation.

The study will rely on a multi-approach (triangulation). It uses a combination of the survey as a quantitative method and the in-depth interview as a qualitative technique.

This section deals with the different methods used in the study as well as defining of the universe and the sample.

The Survey

The survey is the most commonly used research method, not only in mass media studies but also in most of the social studies. It is the best research method that can be used to gather a large amount of data (Babbie, 1983, p. 209).

For this study it was important to use a methodology that enables the researcher to gather a large amount of data from a variety of people while being able to investigate different variables (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). This is why the survey is used, as it enabled the researcher to recruit a variety of study participants to present good quality results.

The In-Depth Interview

The in-depth interview is an important qualitative technique which is commonly used in the mass communication studies. The in-depth interview technique will be used to collect data from the sampled opinion leaders and opinions leaders.

It is an important qualitative technique which enables the researcher to gather a large amount of data from a small sample. Consequently it usually is used when the sample size is small. It is also a significant qualitative technique in gathering any type of specialized information (Graber, 1988). In order to have an insightful view on the issue of whether youth can be considered the new agenda setters and the extent to which social media is counted on for information, interviewing experts and scholars in the field would be necessary.

The opinion leaders interviewed were chosen based on their expertise in the studied area. They are believed to be opinion leaders who have an impact in their communities. Consequently, three professors, three journalists and three activists were interviewed. The three professors are: Professor Sara El Khalili, Adjunct professor at the American University in Cairo; Professor Taha Negm, Head of Mass Communication Department, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University; and Professor Arabi Al Toukhy, Sociology Department, Alexandria University. The three journalists are: Mohamed Al Ashkar, Senior Journalist at Al Ahram Publishing House; Mahmoud Saeed and Mohamed El Gazzar, Senior Journalists at Rose Al Youssef Publishing House. The three activists are: Ahmed Khairy, Ghada Talaat and Ihab Mahmoud.

Defining the Universe

Before selecting the study sample it is essential to decide the universe from which the sample will be drawn. The study was carried out in Cairo governorate on university students from two universities; the American University in Cairo and Cairo University. The choice of university students was based on previous studies that indicated that students, more than other groups/segments in the society, represent the majority of social media users.

Choosing two universities in Cairo was based on the fact the it is a governorate that represents urban areas in the country; based on a previous study youth from urban areas use social media more than those from rural areas. (Tayie *et al*, 2012, pp. 57-58). Furthermore, due to time constraints the researcher could not include other areas/governorates from Egypt in addition to Cairo. Also, choosing the two universities was based on the rationale of representing students from a governmental university and others from a private/non-governmental one.

In addition to students who represent young Egyptians, the study includes opinion leaders. The opinion leaders' universe includes university professors, journalists and activists. Nine opinion leaders were selected with the average of three university professors, three journalists and three political activists.

The concept of "opinion leaders" emerged for the first time during the American presidential elections in 1940. Scholars at that time talked about the "two-step flow of communication", i.e. before messages reach the audience, they pass by opinion leaders who filter them then they are passed to ordinary people. Opinion leaders are supposed to be more active than others in the society. Katz and Lazarsfeld were the first to use the concept of opinion leaders in their studies (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Freidson, 1971, pp. 197-198).

The Sample

Sampling with its recent concept, as we know it today, emerged during the 18th century with the rise of the probability theories. Most studies rely on sampling rather than consensus; as it has many advantages. These may include; saving time and costs as well as enabling the researcher to examine and collect a great amount of variables and accurate data (Ranjan, 1993, pp.2-3).

This study was carried out on a purposive sample, i.e. a non-probability sample. Subjects of the purposive sample are selected according to certain characteristics. Those who do not have these characteristics are excluded from the sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). In the present study the purposive sample was found to be the most suitable. The study aims at examining Egyptian youth's interaction with social media and how they are affected by social media with respect to their political participation. Therefore, it was important to specify certain age categories that represent young Egyptians. For this study, the researcher decided to select them from the age group of 18 to 30 years old. The literature shows that young people in this age category use social media more than any other age group (Al Gazzar, 2013, p.15). Also the study participants must be users of the social media. Therefore, it was also important to select only those who use social media.

In the present survey study, the purposive sample included 400 university students, aged 18 to 30 years, who are active users of the Internet and social media. Active users mainly refer to those who access their Facebook/Twitter accounts frequently, interact with and react to the content they encounter. An active user also tends to be selective with regards to the media content. Students who were not using the Internet and the social media or those who do not fall within the mentioned age range were excluded from the study. Students (undergraduate and postgraduate) were selected from the American University in Cairo and Cairo University with the average of 200 students from each university. For the in-depth interviews, the purposive sample included those who are opinion leaders in the field studied (social media and political participation). The sample included three university professors, three journalists and three political activists. All

three calibers can be regarded as opinion leaders who may direct and lead others in their own domains and areas of specialty.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on the review of previous studies, the topic can be examined from different perspectives with different focuses. As previously mentioned, applying the topic to Egypt, there are crucial areas that remain rarely studied in this topic. These include: the extent to which youth regard social media as credible sources of information, whether they count on it more than traditional media for news and the reasons why they might do, the extent to which this enhances their political participation in terms of directing their behavior to seek their common interest, impacting their decision making (voting, joining or campaigning for political parties), increasing their awareness of political issues and turning their online political activities to offline ones such as engaging in strikes, demonstrations or sit-ins. Also the effect model that applies to new media's impact on Egyptian youth's political participation: is it short term behavioral (causes or issues oriented) or long term attitudinal (cultivating the notion of citizenship and political responsibility). This will clarify the extent to which new media aid in the process of democracy building.

Consequently, the following hypotheses and Research Questions are investigated through this study:

H1a: Egyptian youth utilize social media as primary sources of news.

H1b: Egyptian youth consider social media to be more credible news sources than traditional media.

H2: Social media empower Egyptian youth to turn online political participation to offline (real-life) political participation.

RQ1: Can social media potentially aid in the long term process of transitioning to democracy by enhancing Egyptian youth sense of political responsibility?

RQ2: Can social media have a role in Egyptian youth's assessment of the importance of being politically active citizens?

Variables and Operational Definitions of Hypotheses and Research Questions:

H1a: Egyptian youth utilize social media as primary sources of news.

Independent Variable: social media utilization.

Operational Definition: social media in this study refers to the most popular social networking sites Facebook and/or Twitter.

Dependent Variable: primary source of news.

Operational Definition: in this hypothesis primary source means that respondents resort to it for news before resorting to traditional media.

H1b: Egyptian youth consider social media to be more credible news sources than traditional media

Independent Variable: social media.

Operational Definition: social media in this study refers to the most popular social networking sites Facebook and/or Twitter.

Dependent Variable: credibility of social media as news sources.

Operational Definition: credibility in this hypothesis mainly refers to the extent to which respondents trust the accuracy and truthfulness of news disseminated through social media more than that disseminated through traditional media.

H2: Social media empower Egyptian youth to turn online political participation to offline (real-life) political participation

Independent Variable: social media

Operational Definition: social media in this study refers to the most popular social networking sites Facebook and/or Twitter.

Dependent Variable: turning online political participation to real life political participation.

Operational Definition: this variable refers to the extent to which discussions on social media influence youth to take real-life actions.

RQ1: Can social media potentially aid in the long term process of transitioning to democracy by enhancing Egyptian youth's sense of political responsibility?

Independent Variable: social media

Operational Definition: social media in this study refers to the most popular social networking sites Facebook and/or Twitter.

Dependent Variable: Egyptian youth's sense of political responsibility

Operational Definition: this variable refers to youth feeling politically involved and responsible enough to have an active role in the political life, making political participation a vital part of their lives.

RQ2: Can social media have a role in Egyptian youth's assessment of the importance of being politically active citizens?

Independent Variable: social media

Operational Definition: social media in this study refers to the most popular social networking sites Facebook and/or Twitter.

Dependent Variable: realizing the importance of being politically active citizens.

Operational Definition: this variable refers to Egyptian youth's assessment of the importance of politically active citizens.

Testing the Hypotheses and Research Questions

The survey questionnaires are attached in appendices D (English version) and E (Arabic version) and the in-depth interview questions are attached in Appendix F

H1a: Egyptian youth utilize social media as primary sources of news.

In order to test this hypothesis; whether respondents consider Facebook and/or Twitter as a primary source of news several questions were asked. Respondents were first asked about their usage patterns; the places from which they access Internet in general (Question 4), the regularity of using the Facebook and/or Twitter accounts and the amount of time they spend on them (Questions 5 and 6). Then they were asked about their purpose when accessing Facebook and/or Twitter and the kind of information they obtain from them (Questions 8 and 9). In order to investigate the extent to which respondents count on both/either sites for information/news, they were asked to mention that on a Likert scale (Question 13). Besides respondents were asked about the type of political issues they obtain information on from Facebook and/or Twitter (elections, demonstrations/protests, international issues...etc) (Question 14).

H1b: Egyptian youth consider social media to be more credible news sources than traditional media

This hypothesis aims at investigating the extent to which respondents find Facebook and/or Twitter more trustworthy than traditional media as a source of news/information. In order to test it, the study participants were provided with a statement to which they give response based on a Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (Question 12). The statement tested the extent to which respondents prefer to get their news from Facebook and/or Twitter because they find their news more trustworthy than Television and/or newspapers, as two examples of traditional media.

H2: Social media empower Egyptian youth to turn online political participation to offline (real-life) political participation.

This hypothesis aims at examining whether the online political activity of youth triggers/motivates their willingness and actually makes them active political participants in real life. In order to test this, respondents were asked several questions. They were asked whether they talk with friends or family members about the information they obtain from Facebook and/or Twitter (Question 7), besides being asked about the pages/accounts they like/follow (Question 11). Another question that directly shows the extent to which online political activity is interpreted into offline one; is whether discussions on Facebook and/or Twitter have played a role to become active in recent instances (Question 16). These instances included January 25th revolution, March 2011 Constitutional referendum, the first parliamentary elections after January 25th, the presidential elections after January 25th, June 30th protests, January 14th Constitutional referendum. Respondents were also asked to mention on a Likert scale, whether they consider themselves politically active citizens when they participate on Facebook and/or Twitter in any political issues (Question 18).

With respect to the research questions:

RQ1: Can social media potentially aid in the long term process of transitioning to democracy by enhancing Egyptian youth sense of political responsibility?

This research question is set to examine the extent to which social media can become a factor that paves the way for democracy. It mainly investigates whether respondents' use to social media is single-issue oriented or long-term that can actually cultivate values of citizenship and importance of political participation. In order to find an answer to the research question, respondents were asked several questions. Some of the questions that were previously mentioned in examining **H1a** and **H2** were also answering the **RQ**. Such as the type of political issues respondents obtain from Facebook and/or Twitter, the type of pages/accounts they like/follow, whether discussions on either/both social networking sites encouraged them to participate in the previously mentioned instances and whether they consider themselves politically active when they participate on either/both sites (Questions 11, 14, 16 and 18).

Furthermore, respondents were asked about the extent to which they express their opinions through posts, statuses or tweets (frequently, sometimes, rarely, never) (Question 15). Respondents were further asked about the consequences of the disappearance of Facebook and/or Twitter from their viewpoint (Question 19). The choices they were given to answer this question were that they will not be able to express their opinion on political issues, they will not be updated on current events, they will be less politically active as citizens or it will not make a difference in their engagement in political events.

RQ2: Can social media have a role in Egyptian youth's assessment of the importance of being politically active citizens?

In order to investigate this research question, respondents were asked two main questions. They were asked to mention on a Likert scale whether Facebook and/or Twitter have played a role in making them realize the importance of voicing their opinions on political issues besides the revolution (Question 17). The second question was also a Likert scale statement that examines the extent to which they consider themselves politically active citizens when they participate on Facebook and/or Twitter on political issues (Question 18).

Variables

There are two main variables in the study: social media, i.e. the independent variable and youth's political participation, i.e. the dependent variable.

The independent variable: the social media will be examined through the following indicators:

- Usage patterns of social media (time, use and level of engagement)
- Which social media are most used
- Sources of information on the visited sites
- The most seen contents on social media

- Personal and social factors that may affect young people's use of the social media

The dependent variable: political participation will be examined through the following indicators:

- The extent of relying on social media as a credible source of information
- The extent of their online political involvement (having a page, pages they are members of, the frequency of commenting and sharing political issues of public concern)
- The extent of their offline political involvement (voting, joining or campaigning for a political party, being aware of current political issues, engaging in strikes, demonstrations or sit ins).

Consequently, the dependent variable, i.e. youth's political participation can be measured through activities such as:

- Participating in January 25th revolution (demonstrations that took place on and after January 25th)
- Voting in the first constitutional declaration referendum issued by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (2011)
- Voting in the first and second rounds of presidential elections (June 2012),
- Participating in the second wave of the revolution (June 30th)
- Voting in the 2013 Constitutional referendum

Data Collection

Data of the survey were collected using the questionnaire which is the data collection tool for the survey. Two versions of the questionnaire were used, a version in Arabic for students of Cairo University and another in English for students from the American University. The questionnaires were distributed in April and May 2014.

Regarding the in-depth interviews, different sets of questions were put: general questions to all three calibers, professors, journalists and activists, and then a set of questions designed to each caliber. The interviews were carried out in May 2014.

Reliability and Validity

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) when any scale is used, a preliminary testing must be carried out. At least a pilot study must be carried out to ensure reliability and validity of the measurement. When the used measurement possesses the two qualities, then it is a useful measurement (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011, pp.57).

The measurement is reliable if it consistently gives the same answer every time it is tested. Reliable measurements can detect relationships between variables. In order to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was re-tested, two weeks, after collecting the data on a random sample of 40 students who represent 10 percent of the sample size. They were selected randomly from the same sampled student who responded to the questionnaire before. The Cronbach's alpha Test was used to assess the internal consistency of a measure. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. Alpha test shows that the reliability factor was 0.84 which is an indication that the questionnaire was reliable.

In addition to reliability, the measurement must have validity in order to use it efficiently in studying the variables. A valid measuring device usually measures what it is supposed to measure (ibid, p. 59). The researcher relied on the "face validity" which is achieved by examining measuring device to see, whether on the face of it, it measures what it appears to measure. For this study face validity relied mainly on testing the questionnaire through resorting to experts' assessments of the questionnaire. After getting their feedback, the questionnaire was validated and it was considered ready for data collection. Thus, the researcher relied on the opinions of some experts and research scholars to assess the questionnaire. Their comments were taken into consideration before finalizing the questionnaire to be ready for the actual data collection.

Before starting the real data collection, a pretest was carried out on the questionnaire with a small number of students (20) to make sure that all questions were clear and that the language was also understandable. Accordingly, ten students were selected from Cairo University to pretest the Arabic version of the questionnaire and ten from the American University to pretest the English version. The questionnaires were completed by students individually. From this pretest, it was found that the questionnaire was reliable and ready to be use for data collection.

Approvals

Before data collection, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the American University in Cairo was contacted to obtain the necessary approval then the approval for the Central Authority for Population and Statistics (CAPMAS) was obtained too. The data collection took almost two weeks or more from both universities. The researcher went to different classes in both universities to make sure respondents are in a suitable setting to take the questionnaire. Questionnaires and consent forms were circulated and students were asked to fill them in.

Data Analysis

After collecting data from the students, the analysis process was initiated. Data were analyzed by using the computer. Data were analyzed with the help of a specialized statistician who used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the data. The analysis was carried out according to a plan which suits the study objectives. The statistical analysis included a set of statistics as follows:

- 1- Simple frequencies.
- 2- Percentages of these frequencies.
- 3- Cross tabulations to show relationships and correlation among different variables.
- 4- T-Test

Operational Definitions

Two important concepts are included in the study; i.e. social media and the political participation.

Social media is a term which is used to describe the different forms of communication among people online. Social media include all social networks online that enable people to communicate with each other in a virtual society which unites them in groups based on their common interests. This is usually carried out through direct communication by sending messages, chatting, emails, video conferences, audio conversations, file sharing, blogging and discussion groups. The social media give people access to each others' personal profiles on which they can read their shared posts, comments and updates. Social media are classified as part of the Web 2.0 enabled families; which relies on interactivity of the members who feed the social networks with contents (Ellison, 2006).

In the present study social media refer to the social networking sites, i.e. Facebook and Twitter that enable young people to communicate with each other through chatting, emails, videos, file sharing, ... etc.

Political participation is an important inseparable principal in modern democracy. Political participation may be defined as the process through which individuals may play a role in political life. Political participation includes all the activities that aim at affecting the decisions taken by political institutions such as legislative and executive authorities and political parties. Political participation also enables people to obtain their rights and defend them. Elections may be seen an important mechanism for political participation but it is not everything. Political participation may be seen and expressed in a few activities that may include: taking part in elections through voting; joining political parties; taking part in political campaigns; taking part in demonstrations, protests, sit-in camps and strikes; and taking part in discussing public issues (AlAqad, 2013, pp. 18-19).

Chapter Five

Findings and Analysis

This chapter discusses findings of the survey which was carried out on a purposive sample of young Egyptians. The sample initially included 405 students from the American University in Cairo and Cairo University, males and females. However, five questionnaires were discarded from the analysis as four questionnaires were not completed and one was completed by a non-Egyptian student. In the end, the analysis was carried out on 400 questionnaires. After collecting the data, SPSS was used to produce and analyze the findings. Besides the findings of the survey, this chapter also presents findings of the in-depth interviews which were carried out with nine experts, three university professors (from AUC, Cairo University and Alexandria University), three journalists and three political activists.

Characteristics of the Survey Sample

Table (1) and figure (1) show the characteristics and distribution of the sample drawn from Cairo University and the American University in Cairo.

The total number of the sample is 400 students from both universities with the average of 200 students from each university.

Regarding the gender; the study participants include males (189) and females (211).

Regarding the occupation; respondents of the study are mainly undergraduate (219) and graduate (181) students.

The age categories of the sampled students are displayed through Table (2) and figure (2). More than two thirds of the sampled students are in the age category of 18-25 years of age (66.5 percent). More than a quarter are in the age category 25-30 years of age (27.5 percent). It is worth mentioning that all numbers are rounded up to the nearest tenth.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample

University	Gender	Occupation					
		Undergraduate Student		Graduate Student		Total	
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Cairo University	Male	50	(12.5)	47	(11.8)	97	(24.3)
	Female	64	(16)	39	(9.7)	103	(25.7)
	Total	114	(28.5)	86	(21.5)	200	(50)
The American University in Cairo	Male	43	(10.8)	49	(12.2)	92	(23)
	Female	62	(15.5)	46	(11.5)	108	(27)
	Total	105	(26.2)	95	(23.7)	200	(50)

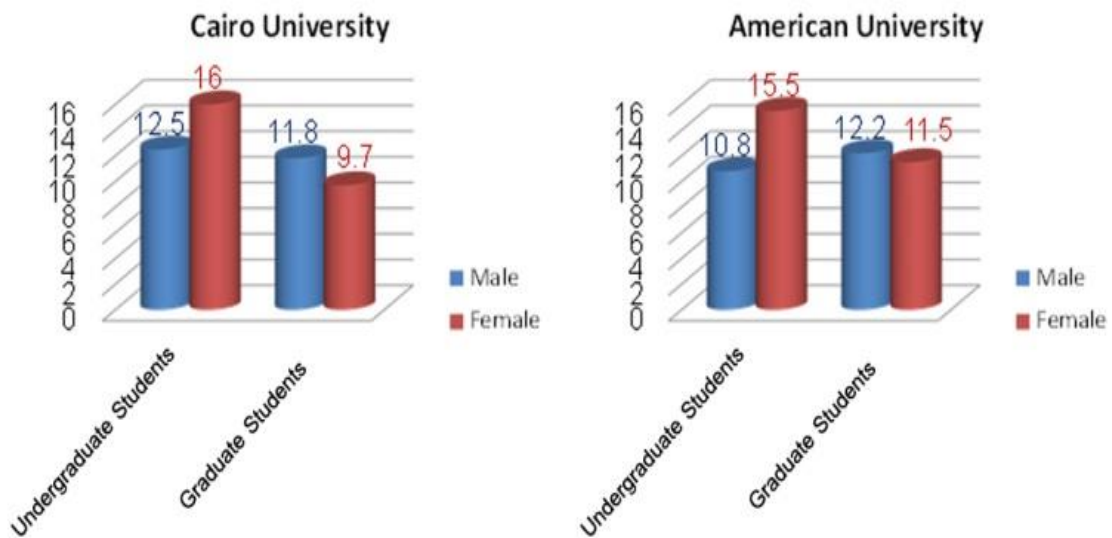


Figure 1: Characteristics of the Sample

Table 2: Ages of the Students

Age Category	N (%)
18 – 25 years	266 (66.5)
25 – 30 years	110 (27.5)
Above 30 years	23 (5.8)
Less than 18 years	1 (0.3)
Total	400 (100)

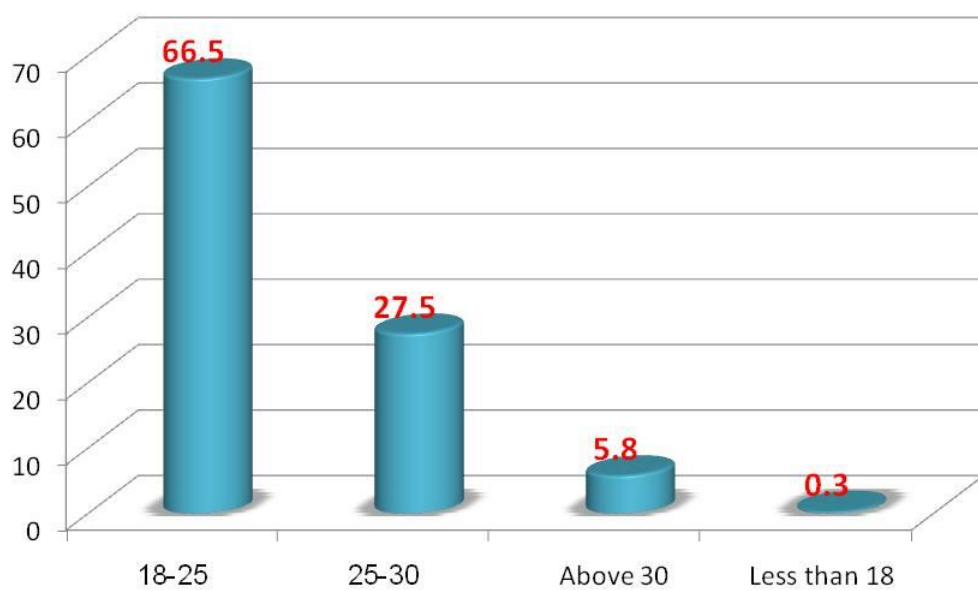


Figure 2: Ages of the Students

Access to the Internet

Table (3) and figure (3) indicate the places from which students access the Internet. The findings have shown that most of the students access the Internet from home (76.8 percent). More than one fifth of the interviewees mentioned that they access the Internet from their mobile phones (22.3 percent). The number of those who access the net from work (8.3 percent) and public places (6.8 percent) was least.

Table 3: Access to the Internet

Place	N	(%)
Home	307	(76.8)
Mobile Phones	89	(22.3)
Work	33	(8.3)
Public Place	27	(6.8)
Total	456*	

*The number is more than the real number as more than one answer was mentioned.

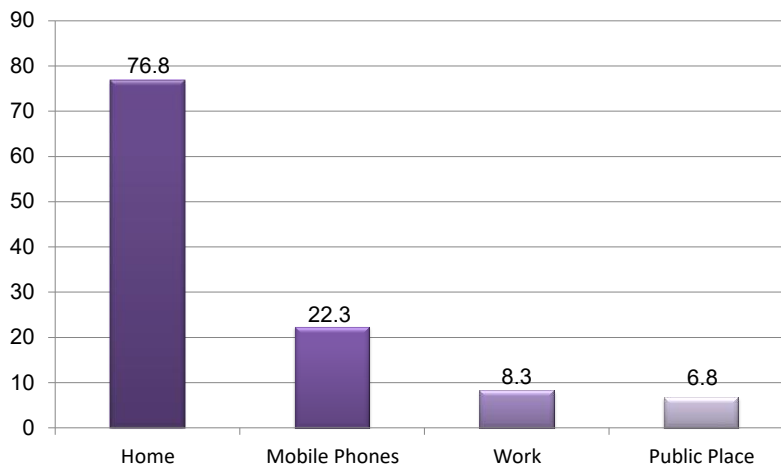


Figure 3: Access to the Internet

Respondents were asked about the frequency/how often they use Facebook and/or Twitter. According to the responses displayed in table (4) and figure (4), 82.3 per cent of the sampled students mentioned that they access Facebook and/or Twitter "daily", 14.8 per cent access them "more than once a week" and a very minor percentage of the respondents access them "once" or "less than once a week".

Table 4: Average Access to the Internet

Access	N	(%)
Daily	329	(82.3)
More than once a week	59	(14.8)
Once a week	8	(2)
Less than once a week	4	(1)
Total	400	(100)

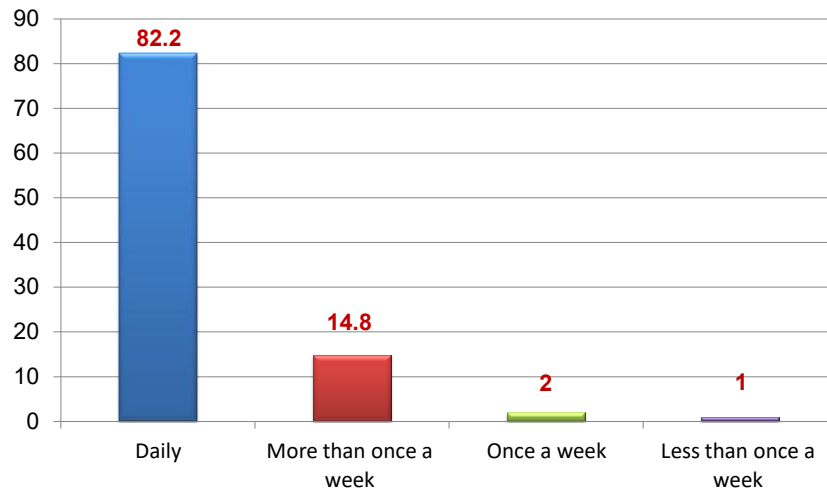


Figure 4: Average Access to the Internet

Regarding regularity of using Facebook and/or Twitter by university and gender, findings have shown that females were heavier users than males in both universities. In Cairo University, females who use the Internet “daily” represented 92.3 percent, whereas males who use the Internet “daily” were only 67 percent of the total number of males from Cairo University. The same applies to students from the American University where the percentage of females who use the Internet “daily” was 85.9 percent and males 83.3 percent (table 5).

Table 5: Regularity of Facebook/Twitter Use by University and Gender

University	Gender	N	Regularity				Total
			Less than once a week	Once a week	More than once a week	Daily	
Cairo University	Male	N	-	1	31	65	97
		(%)	-	(1)	(32)	(67)	(100)
	Female	N	-	-	8	95	103
		(%)	-	-	(7.8)	(92.2)	(100)
American University in Cairo	Male	N	3	2	8	79	92
		(%)	(3.3)	(2.1)	(8.7)	(85.9)	(100)
	Female	N	5	1	12	90	108
		(%)	(4.6)	(0.9)	(11.1)	(83.3)	(100)

When asked about the time they spend online weekly, findings have shown that more than half the sampled students (51.8 percent) mentioned that they spend more than 4 hours a week on online activities. Only a small percentage (7 percent) indicated that they go online less than an hour a week (table 6 and figure 5).

Though females were using the Internet more regularly than males, males spend more time using Facebook and/or Twitter than females, as shown in table (7). There were no significant differences between students from the two universities in this respect.

Table 6: Weekly Online Time

Amount of Time	N	(%)
More than 4 hours	207	(51.8)
3 – 4 hours	61	(15.3)
2 – 3 hours	56	(14)
1 – 2 hours	48	(12)
Less than one hour	28	(7)
Total	400	(100)

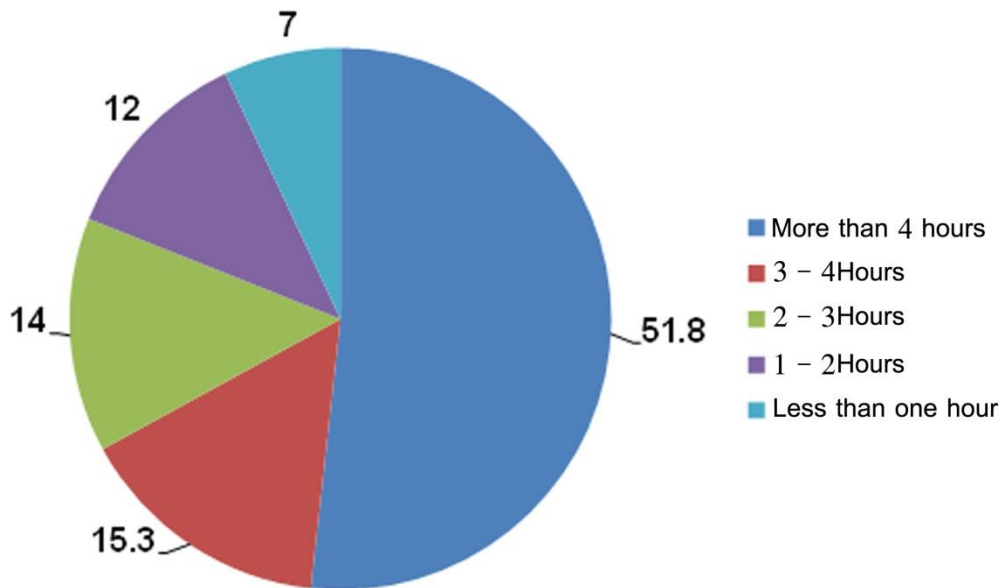


Figure 5: The Amount of Time that Students Spend Online Weekly

Table 7: Weekly Online Time by University and Gender

University	Gender	N	Number of Hours					Total
			Less than one hour	1-2	2-3	3-4	More than 4 hours	
Cairo University	Male	N	4	7	2	19	65	97
		(%)	(4.1)	(7.2)	(2)	(19.6)	(67)	(100)
	Female	N	4	22	30	17	30	103
		(%)	(3.8)	(21.4)	(29.1)	(16.5)	(29.1)	(100)
American University in Cairo	Male	N	6	9	10	9	58	92
		(%)	(6.5)	(9.8)	(10.9)	(9.8)	(63)	(100)
	Female	N	14	10	19	11	54	108
		(%)	(13)	(9.3)	(17.6)	(10.2)	(50)	(100)

Online Activities

Most of the students (95.3 percent) mentioned that they talk with their friends, family members and relatives about the information they obtain from Facebook/Twitter.. There were no significant differences between students from the two universities in this respect. However, females talked slightly more than males with friends. This was even more applicable on the case of students from the American University.

The most mentioned reasons for accessing Facebook and/or Twitter were entertainment and chatting with friends (92.3 percent), which was the most frequently mentioned reason, followed by information seeking (84 percent). Communication and contacts with friends and relatives was another mentioned reason (11.5 percent).

Marketing, sharing ideas and research were the reasons mentioned the least for using the Internet (table 8, figure 6).

Table 8:
Reasons for Accessing Facebook/Twitter

Reason	N	(%)
Entertainment	369	(92.3)
Information seeking	336	(84)
Communication	46	(11.5)
Research	5	(1.3)
Sharing of ideas	4	(1)
Marketing	2	(0.5)
Total	762*	

*The number is more than the real number as more than one answer was mentioned.

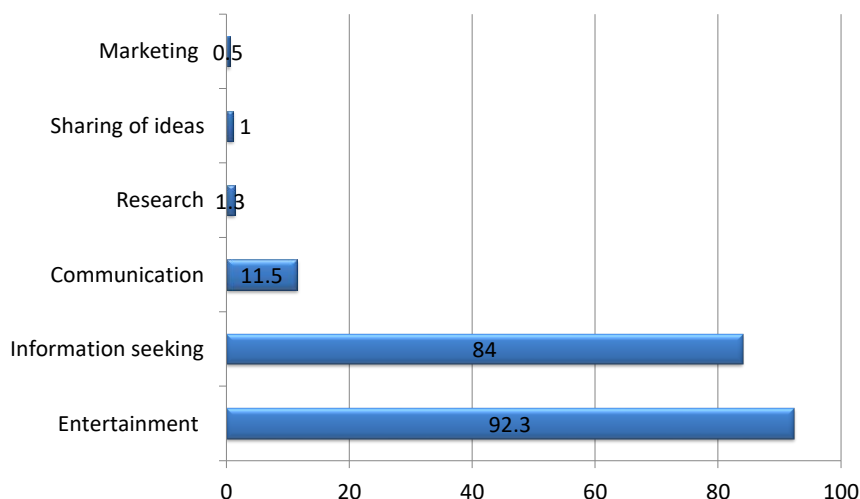


Figure 6: Reasons for Accessing Facebook/Twitter

When the students were asked about the information they obtain from social media, social and cultural information came in first place as the most mentioned (93.5 percent) followed by political information (86.3). Other types of information such as scientific (58 percent) and traffic information (27.3 percent) came in third and fourth places. Information on sports, religion and fashion were the least mentioned information (table 9). Most students (92.2 percent) mentioned that they are members of some online groups. They also mentioned that they usually chat and debate with other members of these groups.

Table 9: Types of Obtained Information

Type of Information	N	(%)
Social/Cultural	374	(93.5)
Political	345	(86.3)
Scientific/Health	232	(58)
Traffic	109	(27.3)
Art	8	(2)
Personal Occasions	5	(1.3)
Sports	4	(1)
Religious	4	(1)
Fashion & Beauty	3	(0.8)
Total	1084*	

*The number is more than the real number as more than one answer was mentioned.

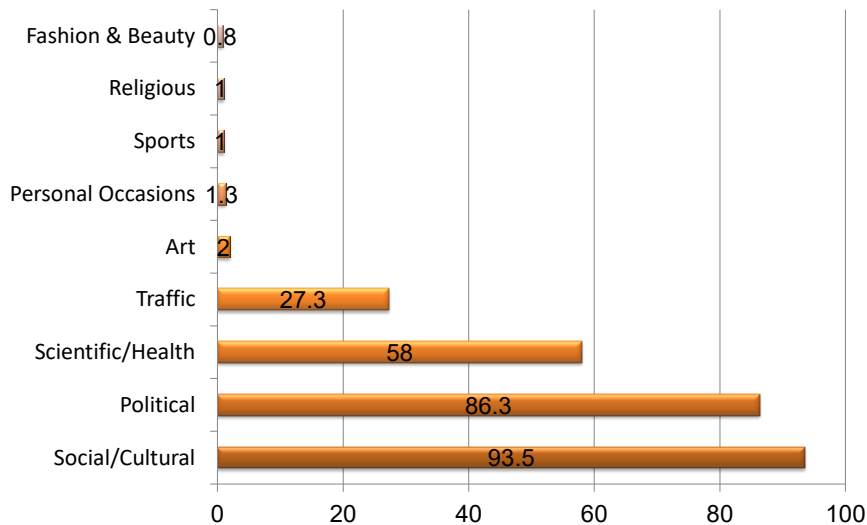


Figure 7: Types of Information Obtained from Social Media

When students were asked about the types of Facebook pages or Twitter accounts which they prefer or use most of the time, social and cultural pages/accounts came in first place (85.1 percent) followed by political pages (62.3 percent). Pages/accounts of scientific and health issues came in third place (36.3 percent) then traffic related pages (14.9 percent). It was found that students check on the roads and traffic conditions from their mobile phones (table 10, Figure 8).

Table 10:
Preferred Online Pages/Accounts

Pages/Accounts Types	N	(%)
Social / Cultural	314	(85.1)
Political	230	(62.3)
Scientific/Health	134	(36.3)
Traffic	55	(14.9)
Entertainment	14	(3.8)
Student activities	8	(2)
Fashion	6	(1.6)
Sport	6	(1.6)
Religion	4	(1.1)
Marketing	4	(1.1)
Business	1	(0.3)
Total	776*	

*The number is more than the real number as more than one answer was mentioned.

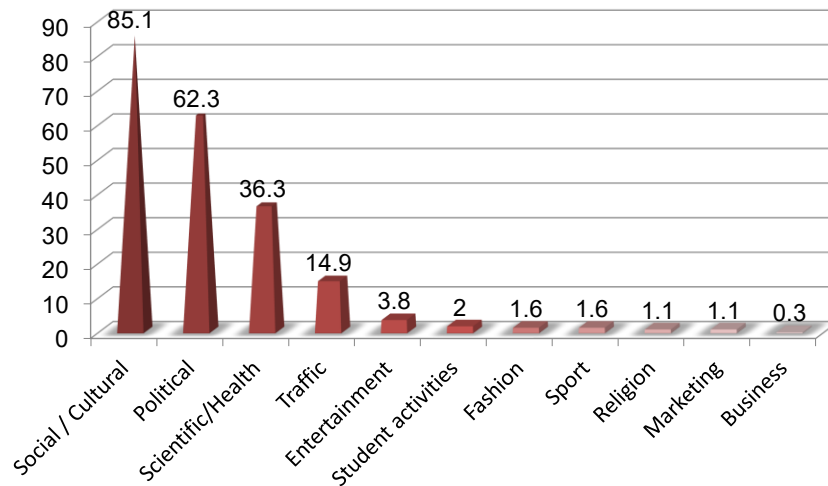


Figure 8: Preferred Facebook Pages /Twitter Accounts

Social Media as Sources of News and Information

When students were asked about their trust in the news and information which they obtain from Facebook and Twitter compared to traditional media such as television and newspapers, more than one third of the students (39 percent) mentioned that they strongly trust the news and information from Facebook and Twitter. A percentage of 35.5 were neutral in this respect (table 11).

Table 11:
Trust in Online Information and News

Degree of Trust	N	(%)
Strongly Agree	156	(39)
Neutral	142	(13.5)
Disagree	47	(11.8)
Agree	45	(11.3)
Strongly Disagree	10	(2.5)
Total	400	(100)

The reliance of a great number of students on Facebook and Twitter as their main sources of information in the post January 25th era also supports the results related to credibility of social media. A percentage of 43.3 indicated that they “strongly agree” that Facebook/Twitter are becoming their main sources of news. More than a quarter of the students mentioned that they “agree”. A small number of students “strongly disagree”.

Comparing students from the two universities with respect to their preference of social media compared to traditional media as sources of information, it was found that males were more than females in both universities with respect to preference of Facebook and Twitter as their main sources of news and information (table 12). In Cairo University, males who frequently prefer social media as their main sources of information and news represent 71.1 percent of the male respondents while females represent 6.8 percent of the total number of females. Also, In the American University, males (50 percent) prefer social media more than females (31.5 percent). It was found that females in the American University rely more on social media than those from Cairo University.

Table 12:**Trust in Online Information and News by University and Gender**

University	Gender	N	I prefer to get my information from Facebook and/or Twitter					Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Cairo University	Male	N	69	15	8	5	-	97
		(%)	(71.1)	(15.5)	(8.2)	(5.2)	-	(100)
	Female	N	7	16	66	14	-	103
		(%)	(6.8)	(15.5)	(64)	(13.6)	-	(100)
American University in Cairo	Male	N	46	7	26	10	3	92
		(%)	(50)	(7.6)	(28.3)	(10.9)	(3.3)	(100)
	Female	N	34	7	42	18	7	108
		(%)	(31.5)	(6.5)	(38.8)	(16.7)	(6.5)	(100)

Findings have shown that Facebook and Twitter were the most important sources of information and news for a great number of students. A percentage of 43.3 of the students mentioned that they “strongly agree” with the statement that Facebook and Twitter were their main sources of news and information. More than one fourth (26.3 percent) of the respondents mentioned that they “agree” as shown in table 13.

Comparing the answers of students from the two universities (table 14), it was found that males were more dependent on Facebook and Twitter as their main sources of information and News. However, there were some slight differences: males from Cairo University (66 percent) were more dependent than males from the American University (57.6 percent); females in the American University (38 percent) were also more dependent than females from Cairo University (14.7 percent).

Table 13: Facebook and Twitter as Main Sources of News

Facebook and/or Twitter	N	(%)
Strongly Agree	173	(43.3)
Agree	105	(26.3)
Neutral	80	(20)
Disagree	35	(8.8)
Strongly Disagree	7	(1.8)
Total	400	(100)

Table 14:**Facebook and Twitter as the Main Sources of News by University and Gender**

University	Gender	N	Facebook and/or Twitter have been my main sources of news					Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Cairo University	Male	N	64	22	3	8	-	97
		(%)	(66)	(22.7)	(3)	(8.2)	-	(100)
	Female	N	15	40	39	8	1	103
		(%)	(14.7)	(38.8)	(37.7)	(7.8)	(1)	(100)
American University in Cairo	Male	N	53	12	18	6	3	92
		(%)	(57.6)	(13)	(19.6)	(6.5)	(3.3)	(100)
	Female	N	41	31	20	13	3	108
		(%)	(38)	(28.7)	(18.5)	(12)	(2.8)	(100)

Facebook and Twitter were important sources of information about different political issues. Students mentioned that they rely on Facebook and Twitter as sources of information about demonstrations and protests (84.5 percent). News of elections came in second place (56 percent) and international issues came in third place (53.3 percent) as the most frequently mentioned political issues. Facebook and Twitter were not important sources of information about explosions, judgments and trial news (table 15 and figure 9).

Table 15:
Facebook and Twitter as Sources of Political Information

Political Issues	N	(%)
Demonstration/Protests	338	(84.5).
Elections	224	(56)
International issues	213	(53.3)
Explosion	2	(0.5)
Judgments/Trials News	1	(0.3)
Total	778*	

*The number is more than the real number as more than one answer was mentioned.

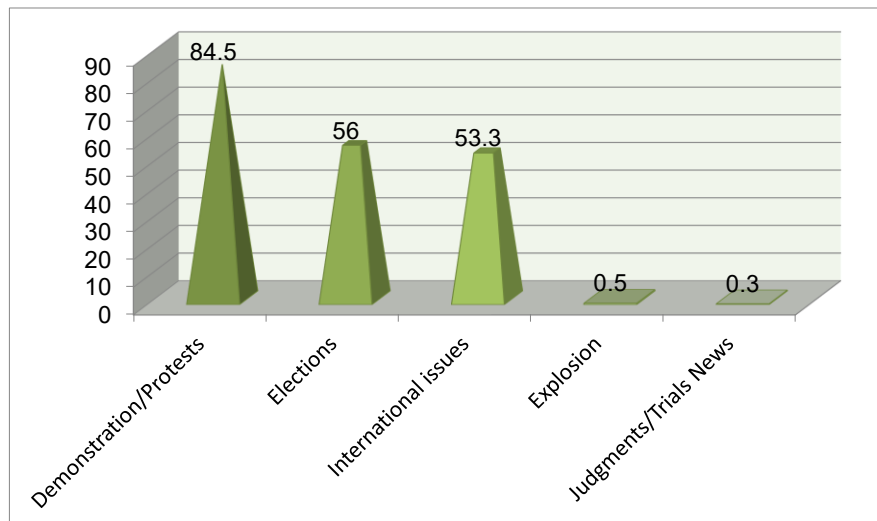


Figure 9: Facebook and Twitter as Sources of Political Information

Social Media and Political Participation of Egyptian Youth

Nearly half the students (49.5 percent) mentioned that they frequently express their opinion and attitudes through posts, statuses or tweets on Facebook/Twitter (table 16). Twenty-seven percent mentioned that they express their opinion sometimes. Nearly one fifth of the students rarely (17.5 percent) or never (6 percent) express their opinions online. Comparing students from the two universities, it was found that males in both universities were expressing their views and opinions more than females.

Table 16: Expressing Opinions Online

I express my opinion	N	(%)
Frequently	198	(49.5)
Sometimes	108	(27)
Rarely	70	(17.5)
Never	24	(6)
Total	400	(100)

Comparing students from the two universities, findings have shown that the males from Cairo University were very much in support of expressing their views and opinions online (73.2 percent) compared to males from the American University (56.5 percent). However, the situation for female respondents was different: they were much less enthusiastic in expressing their opinion online than males in both universities. In Cairo University, those who were frequently expressing their opinion represented 56.5 against 38.9 percent from the American University. Female respondents from the American University were more open to expressing their opinion than those from Cairo University (table 17 & figure 9).

Table 17:
Expressing Opinions Online by University and Gender

University	Gender	N	I express my opinion through posts, statuses or tweets on Facebook and/or Twitter				Total
			Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
Cairo University	Male	N	71	18	6	2	97
		(%)	(73.2)	(18.6)	(6.1)	(0.5)	(100)
	Female	N	33	51	13	6	103
		(%)	(32)	(49.5)	(12.7)	(5.8)	(100)
American University in Cairo	Male	N	52	12	19	9	92
		(%)	(56.5)	(3.3)	(20.7)	(9.8)	(100)
	Female	N	42	27	32	7	108
		(%)	(38.9)	(25)	(29.6)	(6.5)	(100)

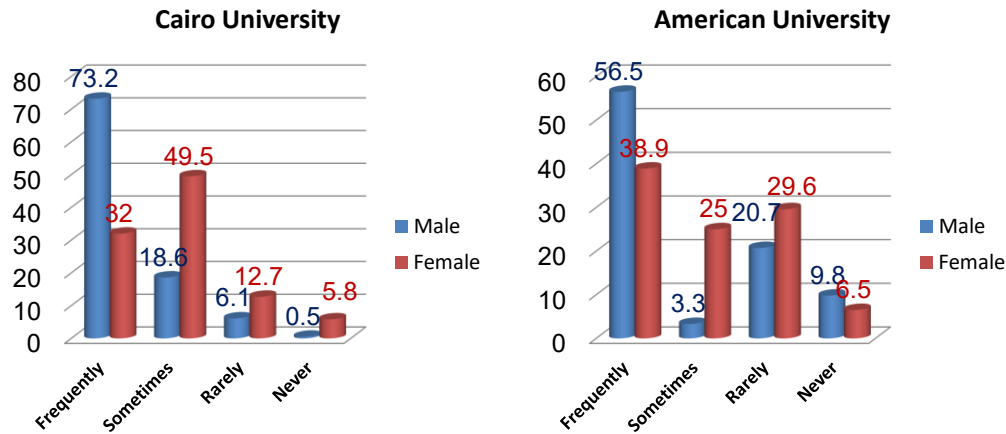


Figure 10: Expressing Opinions Online by University and Gender

Table (18) and figure (11) present findings related to the role of online discussions in reinforcing political participation of the students in real life. Findings have shown that online discussions played an effective role in activism and participation in the real life. This was clearly displayed during the January 25th revolution (89.3 percent) as well as the June protests (78.5 percent) where the online discussion encouraged students to be more involved in real life. That was also clear in the presidential elections of 2012 (36.3 percent) and the January 2014 constitutional referendum (26 percent). Online discussions were also important and influential in the first parliamentary elections after the January 25th revolution (25.8 percent) and the constitutional referendum of March 2011 (25.5 percent).

Table 18: Role of Online Discussions in Reinforcing Political Participation

Political Issues	N	(%)
January 25 th revolution	357	(89.3)
June 30 th protests	314	(78.5)
The presidential elections after the revolution	145	(36.3)
January 14 th constitutional referendum	104	(26)
The first parliamentary elections after the January 25 th revolution	103	(25.8)
March 2011 Constitutional referendum	102	(25.5)
Total	1125*	

*The number is more than the real number as more than one answer was mentioned.

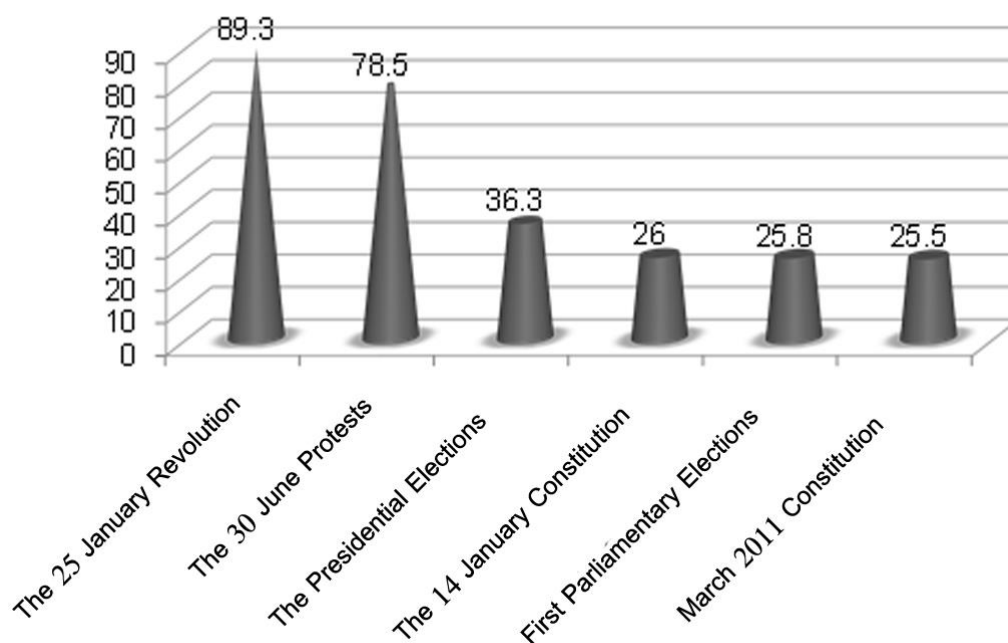


Figure 11: Role of Online Discussions on Reinforcing Political Participation

When the students were asked about the role that Facebook and/or Twitter have played in helping them realize the importance of voicing their opinions on political issues besides the Egyptian revolution, it was found that the role was vital to more than two fifths of the students as they mentioned that they “strongly agree” (41.2 percent). A percentage of 29.8 mentioned that they “agree” (Table 19).

Table 19:
Importance of Facebook/Twitter in Encouraging Real Participation

Facebook and/or Twitter have played a role	N	(%)
Strongly Agree	165	(41.2)
Agree	119	(29.8)
Neutral	88	(22)
Disagree	23	(5.8)
Strongly Disagree	5	(1.2)
Total	400	(100)

Comparing the answers of the students from the two universities (table 20 & figure 12), findings have shown that males from Cairo University appreciate the importance of online political participation (64.9 percent) more than those from the American University (55.4 percent). However, the situation was different in the case of females. Females from Cairo University did not appreciate the importance of online political participation to the same extent as the females from the American University (37 percent).

**Table 20: Importance of Facebook/Twitter in Encouraging Real Participation by
University and Gender**

University	Gender	N	Facebook and/or Twitter have played a role in my realization of the importance of voicing my opinion on political issues besides the Egyptian revolution					Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Cairo University	Male	N	63	24	10	-	-	97
		(%)	(64.9)	(24.7)	(10.3)	-	-	(100)
	Female	N	11	54	29	8	1	103
		(%)	(10.7)	(52.4)	(28.2)	(7.8)	(1)	(100)
American University in Cairo	Male	N	51	15	17	7	2	92
		(%)	(55.4)	(16.3)	(18.5)	(7.6)	(2.2)	(100)
	Female	N	40	26	32	8	2	108
		(%)	(37)	(24)	(29.6)	(7.4)	(1.9)	(100)

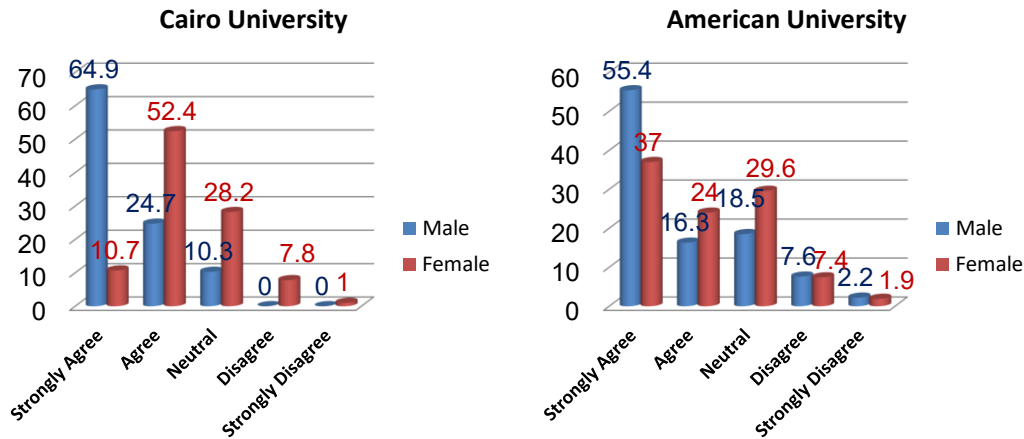


Figure 12: Importance of Social Media in Encouraging Real Participation by University and Gender

When students were asked whether they consider themselves politically active citizens when they participate on Facebook and/or Twitter (in any form) on current political issues, more than one third (37 percent) mentioned that they “Strongly agree” and a percentage of 18.8 mentioned that they “agree” as shown in table 20.

Table 23 shows that most students feel that if Facebook or Twitter disappear, they won’t be able to take part in “political events” (65.8 percent) or be “active citizens” (47.5 percent) or “express their opinion on political issues (45.5 percent). While 30 percent of the students feel that it won’t make any difference and that they can do without them (table 21).

Table 21:

Online Participation and Political Engagement

I consider myself a politically active citizen	N	(%)
Strongly Agree	148	(37)
Neutral	81	(20.3)
Disagree	75	(18.8)
Agree	70	(17.5)
Strongly Disagree	26	(6.5)
Total	400	(100)

Comparing the students from the two universities (table 22 and figure 13), it was found that males in general strongly agree on the importance of online participation and its contribution to political activism in real life. However, there were some differences between the two universities. Males in Cairo University were more in favor of online participation (62.9 percent) than males from the American University (52.2 percent). At the same time, females in the American University (30.6 percent) were more in favor of online participation than those from Cairo University (5.8 percent). This may be due to the fact that females in the American University could be more liberal and more open to western culture than those in Cairo University; at the same time they are more active online.

Table 22: Online Participation and the Feeling of Political Activism by University and Gender

University	Gender	N	I consider myself a politically active citizen when I participate on Facebook and/or Twitter (in any form) to address current political issues					Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Cairo University	Male	N	61	25	7	3	1	97
		(%)	(62.9)	(25.8)	(7.2)	(3)	(1)	(100)
	Female	N	6	18	38	39	2	103
		(%)	(5.8)	(17.5)	(36.9)	(37.9)	(1.9)	(100)
American University in Cairo	Male	N	48	10	12	12	10	92
		(%)	(52.2)	(10.9)	(13)	(13)	(10.9)	(100)
	Female	N	33	17	24	21	13	108
		(%)	(30.6)	(15.7)	(22.2)	(19.4)	(12)	(100)

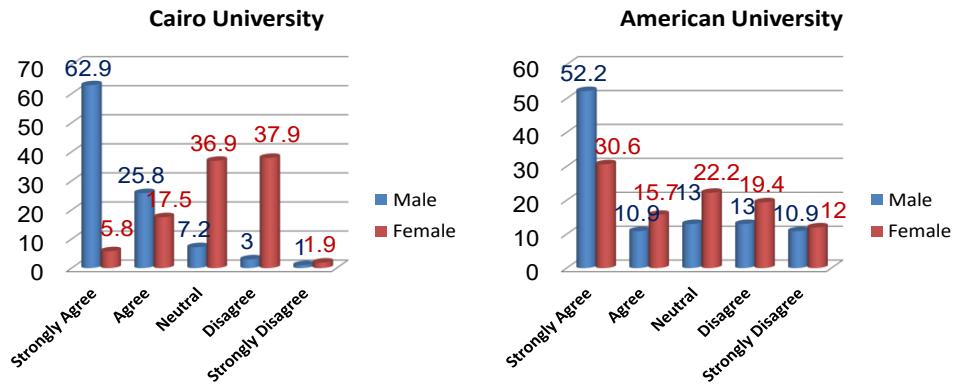


Figure 13: Online Participation and the Feeling of Political Activism by University and Gender

Finally, Table (23) and figure (14) display responses when students were asked about the effect of the absence of Facebook/Twitter on their political participation. As mentioned, it was generally indicated that it would greatly affect their political participation. Nearly two thirds (65.8 percent) of the students mentioned that they would not be updated on current events. Nearly half the sampled students (47.5 percent) mentioned that they would be less politically active as citizens and would not be able to express their opinion on political issues. A small percentage mentioned that it would have no effect on them (30 percent).

Table 23: Influence of Disappearance of Facebook/Twitter

If Facebook and/or Twitter disappear	N	(%)
I would not be updated on current events.	263	(65.8)
I will be less politically active as a citizen.	190	(47.5)
I will not be able to express my opinion on political issues.	182	(45.5)
It will not make a difference in my engagement in political events.	120	(30)
Total	755*	

*The number is more than the real number as more than one answer was mentioned.

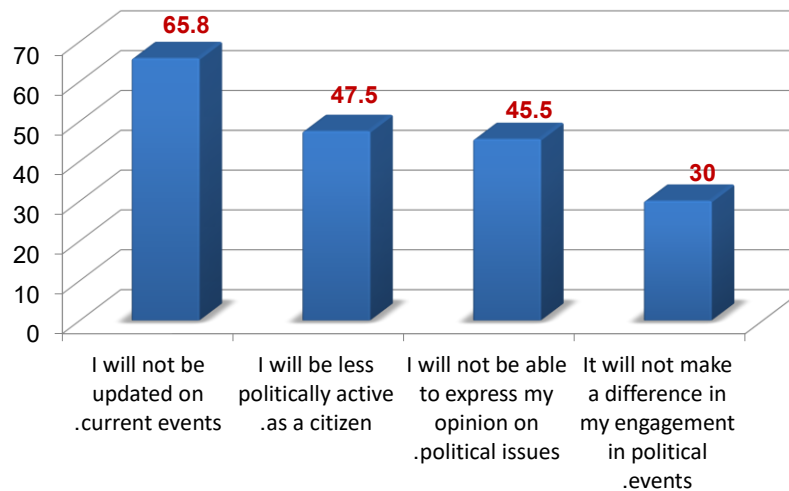


Figure 14: Influence of Disappearance of Facebook/Twitter

In sum therefore, and according to the findings of the study it was clear that social media play an important role in empowering young Egyptians for political participation. There were some variations in the findings that emerged from both universities.

The Hypotheses and Research Questions

H1a: Egyptian youth utilize social media as primary sources of news.

According to the findings resulting from the t-test analysis, H1a is supported. At the same time, according to table (24) t-test shows that there are statistically significant differences between males and females with respect to their reliance on social media as their primary sources of news. The value of t-test is 5.254.

Table 24:

T-Test for Respondents Gender by Use of Social Media as Primary Source of News

Gender	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Male	189	2.47	.551	5.254	.01
Female	211	2.19	.473		

Discussing the age factor, the value of t-test is -4.781 (table 25). This indicates that there are statistically significant differences between different the two age groups; undergraduate students (younger respondents) and graduate students (older respondents).

Table 25: T-Test for Respondents Age by Social Media as Primary Source of News

Age	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
18 – 25	219	2.21	.499	-4.781	.01
25 – 30	181	2.46	.532		

Examining the recalls of students from different universities, it was found that the differences between students from Cairo University and the American University in Cairo were not statistically significant as shown in table (26). T-test value is -1.612 at the level of significance of 0.108.

Table 26: T-Test for University by Use of Social Media as Primary Source of News

University	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Cairo University	200	2.28	0.461	-1.612	.108
The American University	200	2.37	0.586		

H1b: Egyptian youth consider social media to be more credible news sources than traditional media.

The hypothesis is supported according to t-test. At the same time it was clear that there are statistically significant differences between males and females with respect to considering social media to be more credible news sources. The t-value is 8.759 (table 27).

Table 27: T-Test for Gender by Credibility of Social Media

Gender	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Male	189	4.22	1.098	8.759	.01
Female	211	3.28	1.048		

Dealing with age factor, the value of t-test (-6.674) has shown that there are statistically significant differences between younger and older respondents with respect to their trust in information or news obtained from social media.

Table 28: T-Test for Respondents' Age by Credibility of Social Media

Age	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
18 – 25	219	3.39	1.137	-6.674	.01
25 – 30	181	4.13	1.077		

It is also worth indicating that there are no significant differences between students from the two universities regarding trusting social media news/information (table 29). The t-test value is 1.628.

Table 29: T-Test for University by Credibility of Social Media

University	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Cairo University	200	3.82	1.050	1.628	.104
The American University	200	3.63	1.273		

H2: Social media empower Egyptian youth to turn online political participation to offline (real-life) political participation.

Findings have shown that this hypothesis is supported. At the same time, it was found than there are not statistically significant differences between males and females. The value of t-test is 1.741.

Table 30: T-Test for Gender by Real Political Participation

Gender	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Male	189	2.12	0.245	1.741	0.062
Female	211	1.99	0.415		

Regarding the different age groups, it was found that the differences were not significant between the two age groups as shown in table (31). Though t- value is 3.514, the level of significance is more than 0.05

Table 31: T-Test for Age by Real Political Participation

Age	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
18 – 25	219	2.32	.562	3.514	.055
25 – 30	181	2.87	.541		

Findings have also indicated that there are not significant differences between students from the two universities with respect to the real-life political participation (table 32). The value of t is 1.625.

Table 32: T-Test for University by Real Political Participation

University	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Cairo University	200	2.22	0.221	1.625	.051
The American University	200	2.84	0.205		

RQ1: Can social media potentially aid in the long term process of transitioning to democracy by enhancing Egyptian youth sense of political responsibility?

Findings have shown that social media play a role in enhancing young Egyptians' sense of political participation.

With respect to gender, it was found that the differences between males and females are not statistically significant as shown in table (33) as the level of significance is more

than 0.05 though the value of t is 8.421. As shown in the tables, same applies to the situation of the different age groups (table 34) and the two universities (table 35).

Table 33: T-Test for Gender by Role of Social Media in Enhancing Youth's Sense of Political Participation

Gender	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Male	189	2.10	0.210	8.421	0.055
Female	211	2.13	0.351		

Table 34: T-Test for Age by Role of Social Media in Enhancing Youth's Sense of Political Participation

Age	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
18 – 25	219	2.312	0.133	6.251	0.052
25 – 30	181	2.301	0.234		

Table 35: T-Test for University by Role of Social Media in Enhancing Youth's Sense of Political Participation

University	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Cairo University	200	2.74	2.315	5.954	0.074
The American University	200	2.64	2.412		

RQ2: Can social media have a role in Egyptian youth's assessment of the importance of being politically active citizens?

Findings have shown that social media have a role in making Egyptian youth realize the importance of being politically active citizens. However the differences between

males and females are not statistically significant (table 36) as the value of t is -1.612. The same applies to the situation of the two age groups (table 37) and the two universities (table 38) where the level of significance was more than 0.05.

Table 36: T-Test for Gender by Role of Social Media in Realizing the Importance of Being Politically Active Citizens

Gender	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Male	189	2.11	0.214	-1.612	.001
Female	211	2.32	0.320		

Table 37: T-Test for Age by Role of Social Media in Realizing the Importance of Being Politically Active Citizens

Occupation	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
18 – 25	219	2.30	.410	5.201	0.060
25 – 30	181	2.34	.154		

Table 38: T-Test for University by Role of Social Media in Realizing the Importance of Being Politically Active Citizens

University	N	Mean Scores	SD	t	P
Cairo University	200	2.02	0.201	4.215	0.059
The American University	200	2.14	0.138		

Findings of In-Depth Interviews with Experts

This section discusses the findings of the in-depth interviews which were carried out with nine experts from different calibers: three university professors in the field of mass communication from the American University in Cairo, Cairo University and Alexandria University, three journalists from Al Ahram Publishing House and Rose Al Youssef Publishing House, and three political activists. The in-depth interview is an important qualitative technique. It enables the researcher to gather a great amount of more insightful information about the researched area. The process of selecting the sample went as follows: after selecting names of the experts, they were contacted by emails to fix appointments for the interviews. Then the interviews were conducted in universities and media organizations. On average each interview lasted for 25-30 minutes. After recording the interviews they were transferred from the audio into written format.

The issues discussed through the interviews include:

- Factors affecting the spread of social media,
- Traditional and social media as sources of news and information,
- Social media and transitioning to democracy,
- Young people and political participation,
- Social media and public agenda setting and
- Short-term and long-term effects of social media.
- Effects of citizen journalism on traditional journalism
- Use of Social Media in Political participation.

In the following pages, the mentioned issues will be displayed based on the experts' various input.

Factors Affecting the Spread of Social Media

When asked about the factors affecting the swift spread of social media, it was indicated by Professor Sara El-Khalili, adjunct faculty at the American University in Cairo that the number of the Internet users has increased rapidly after the January 25th revolution: reaching almost more than 40 million. This came as one of the major

consequences of the revolution. Therefore, the January 25th revolution was an important factor in spreading social media use, especially among youth.

This was confirmed by Professor Arabi Al Toukhy, Sociology Professor at Alexandria University, who mentioned that the use of social media became prominent among a wide range of people including the youth as well as the elder generations who became aware of this phenomenon. Social media became the trend of the day; with everyone in the present time being keen to exist on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Accordingly, the motives behind using social media range from maintaining contact with family and using it for news and information. This goes back to the fact that social networking sites are free of charge; which counts as another important factor that aided in the spread of social media.

Emphasizing on this, Professor Taha Negm, head of mass communication department, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, indicated that the low cost of new and social media and the increased awareness of the youngsters are significant factors that are behind the wide spread of social media. Also according to Negm and political activist Ihab Mahmoud, another significant factor that is considered one of the most important is the social movements that has been occurring in the society in the wake of January 25th revolution. Furthermore, Mahmoud added that the spread of social media can be linked to high levels of education reflected through the increased number of students. Ahmed Khairy, political activist, added that social media also act as an alternative to official/traditional media in enabling its users to practice free expression and further display their creativity.

From the perspective of Mohamed Al Ashkar, senior journalist, Al Ahram Publishing House, the spread of the Internet connection among Egyptians act as a crucial factor that in turn led to the spread of social media besides other factors. The Internet is considered a medium that offers an efficient platform that enables connection between individuals, peoples and countries; it managed to break the geographical boundaries. "It is now frequently existent that you find a chat room that includes people from all over the world, coming from different backgrounds and cultures" says Al Ashkar.

Another platform that should be mentioned is that offered with the advent of new communication technology, the spread of satellite channels and the fourth generation of mobile phones. These are all other factors that increased the social media use more than ever before.

Besides the mentioned technological factors, there are other factors that can be dubbed social or political according to Ghada Talaat, political activist. These include citizens' sense of lacking freedom in general and most importantly freedom of expression. Consequently, people started searching for a platform on which they can find and practice "openness" and freedom. This exactly is when social media started spreading; they provide people with what they have been searching for. Talaat explained that social media provide citizens with a "virtual world" in which freedom and the ability to express without barriers exist.

Traditional and Social Media as Sources of Information and News

According to journalist Mohamed Saeed, Rose Al Youssef Publishing House, nowadays people have a great variety of media with the combination of both new and traditional media. With the emergence of new media, traditional media personnel realized the importance of existing on new media, adopting a scenario of convergence. Consequently, most media outlets are keen on having their own online pages, Facebook and Twitter accounts; which emphasizes the effect and significance of social media. This comes as a crucial step that enables traditional media to stay in touch with social media users, who are mainly youth, and seek to attract them to become part of their audience. Accordingly, now most media outlets have what is dubbed "integrated newsrooms" which combines both new and traditional media contents as clarified by Saeed.

This leaves the question of whether new media are strongly competing with traditional media or they just act as a complementary type of media valid. When asked about the most credible sources for information and news: El-Khalili mentioned that she considers established "traditional" media outlets as more "credible and trustworthy sources than activists on the ground". This goes back to the fact that activists are often biased when they report while professional journalists are more reliable as they report both sides of the

story. These media people also try to be objective; because this is a requirement to remain successfully professional. While on the other hand, activists are not required to stay objective. In brief traditional media are still more reliable and trustworthy sources of news and information than social media. “I personally still trust news agencies such as Associated Press more than social media” says El Khalili. However, all still depend “on the story, the news and the event” as she added.

Trustworthiness of Egyptian media highly depends on the organizations. Some are trustworthy and others are not. According to El-Khalili, television is considered as a more trustworthy medium than print media. This contradicts with the view of Ahmed Khairy, political activist, who sees the traditional media as losing their credibility as they function “in the service of certain agendas” and not professionally. Traditional media’s credibility was also stressed by both journalists Ashkar and Gazzar, who think that television, newspapers and news agencies still have more credibility than social media. Gazzar commented on that saying: “We cannot rely on social media as sources of information and news. They are meant to be used mainly for socializing with and contacting friends and not for news”. He added that social media can be used to mobilize people. Moreover, traditional media are subject to “code of practice” and “professional ethics” which are not in evidence existent in the case of social media, Gazzar added.

Facebook which is the most common social networking site has less credibility than Twitter which may be seen as more trustworthy. However, social media may be seen as other complementary faster sources of news in addition to traditional media. Social media also raised a legal problem related to the content spread on them. This is an issue that has been solved in some countries such as France and Britain as mentioned by Al Ashkar.

Social media might have impacted the functions of traditional media with regards to, in many instances, becoming primary sources of information and news. This goes back to the fact that Internet-enabled social media are faster disseminators of news than traditional media. Accordingly, traditional media's role can be vulnerable to change; “I feel that they won’t be the primary sources of news anymore” was Toukhy's comment on that. Consequently, social media can act as a crucial pressure party on the traditional media to become more objective as Toukhy clarified. El-Khalili added that "If traditional media

are regarded as watch dogs over the authorities, then social media are the watch dogs over the watchdogs". This means that through social media's rapid information distribution, traditional media are forced to stay objective; then here it can be inferred that social media are watching traditional media one way or another.

El Khalili continues that this depend on the social media usage intensity; heavy users' perspective would be different than that of lighter users. And also traditional media are still regarded as more objective in many instances when they appeal to the whole audience.

According to Talaat, "though social media are so important, we still need to rely on traditional media as more important sources of news and information due to the great capacities they have compared with the social media as sources of news. We have to admit that some online news and information are not 100 percent correct/trustworthy".

On the other hand, Negm indicated that social media can be trusted by 75 percent when compared with the other official "traditional" media which present only "one side of the story". He also indicated that social networking sites of official and international organizations may also be trusted as good sources of news and information. This contradicts with what Mahmoud mentioned. He thinks that credibility of social media needs to be increased. He also believes that political activists need to be trained on some professional skills if they want their credibility to increase. Social media have been developed a lot and they became more trustworthy for young people. According to Khairy, their importance lies in the fact that they are more consumed by youth than traditional media. Still traditional media are more credible and trustworthy.

Social Media and Transitioning to Democracy

No doubt that social media create the space for people to express their opinions. They also allow debating and discussions; which created both a form of citizens' representation and free flow of information. Therefore, according to El-Khalili "social media can pave the way to democracy but it cannot be considered enough; that is not all. Democracy needs many other things to pave the way".

Toukhy added that the use of social media in itself is a form of practicing democracy as they give equal chances and spaces to a large segment of people regardless of their social or economic background as the use of social media only requires some simple skills in order to be able to be part of the process.

Social media may play an important role in democratic transformation. They can present fast and free platforms for debating. They can also complete the role of traditional media; as social media may be seen as less credible sources, so their role should be complementary rather than act as a sole source of news.

Social media may also play a role in democratic transformation through guiding citizens and spreading of democratic ideas. However, Gazzar mentioned that this can only be limited to social media users and not to the whole population. This means that, because of digital divide, social media do not represent all citizens.

Since the freedom to express and become represented is one of the main pillars of any democracy, social media play an important role in fostering and spreading a democratic conduct. Through social media youth become empowered to express themselves and be represented more than they are in traditional media. As mentioned and agreed on by Talaat and Mahmoud, social media enable the youngster to find others with common interests and so exchange ideas and views unifying their efforts; through taking part in protests and revolutions for instance. This has been prominent since the January 25th and June 30th revolutions.

The factor that contributes most to this is the fact that social media cannot be easily controlled by the state like traditional media. Consequently, according to Negm, youth found them as a platform through which they get to express themselves freely; according to Mahmoud they mainly give "voice to the voiceless". Furthermore, social media act as a factor that helps in the democratic process through aiding in fostering political practices. For example, Khairy mentioned "electronic parties" are formed online and mainly spread through social media, besides already existing political parties started having their accounts and pages on Twitter and Facebook.

Young people and Political Participation

Young People have different degrees of political participation which is not only limited to demonstrations and protests. According to El-Khalili young people need to act as pressure groups which fight against corruption and make real changes. There are some steps to be an active political participant. Civic Engagement is an initial step of political participation which is not only limited to demonstration and young people need to do more.

According to El-Khalili, in the past, especially before the recent uprisings, political participation's definition to most people was limited to voting. And people were not keen on voting; as fraud of results was common. El-Khalili commented on that saying: "I can tell you that the concept of political participation has changed as the context has changed too". The concept of political participation varied after the revolution and it is not any more limited to voting. Toukhy also added that they "hope that young people will use social media more effectively, not only for organizing protests but also for more positive political involvement in the society" he said.

Social media can also play a role in encouraging young people's political participation as they provide them with the opportunity not only to discuss and debate but also to join political groups and parties. According to Al-Ashkar and Gazzar, they can also help young people to play social roles in societies and become good citizens, social activists and then political activists. Young people's political participation cannot be limited to demonstrations and protests; it can also be expanded to more positive roles through joining active groups and civic parties to fight against corruption. Therefore, there are many peaceful forms of political participation with respect to the order of law and the state. According to Gazzar "for instance, university students may start to be politically active through positive deeds rather than violent protests".

Consequently, there is a need to train youth on how to be active politically and put them on the right track. Talaat added that young people also need to be given chances in official positions in the country.

According to Negm and Khairy, young people's political participation cannot be limited to voting, they must be motivated to become actively engaged through "student unions" or other forms of informal organizations.

Social Media and Agenda Setting

When professors were asked about the role of social media in setting the agenda, it was indicated by El-Khalili and Toukhy that social media will set people's agenda and they will have an impact on the long known role of the traditional media in setting people's agenda. Moreover, social media have the capacity to also set the agenda for traditional media themselves.

Social media became very influential in determining what people talk and are concerned about most. Ashkar added that they attract attention of the users to certain issues mainly raised by their peers in the society.

According to Negm, social media are considered to be influential in determining the audience's agenda especially when it is concerned with real activities. They are considered most effective in this respect and their role is more important than traditional media. Mahmoud commented on that though saying: "though social media have a role to play in setting the audience's agenda, this is only limited to agendas of users of social media and not all citizens".

However, according to Gazzar who provided contradictory view; traditional media/journalism will always have the lead as information gatekeepers who manage to set the primary agenda. He also added that social media are not taking control over news and information away from "traditional journalists".

Another perspective was indicated by Talaat; the role of social media is crucial not in setting the public's agenda, but for setting the agenda for the governments. Social media are very important for governments as they tell them about trends of the public opinion and attitudes of the citizens in the streets. This comes as a result of the fact that the majority of content on social media is created by ordinary citizens. Therefore, "I may say that social media set the agenda for governments and authorities" commented Talaat.

Short-Term and Long-Term Effects of Social Media

When asked about the type of effect social media might have; whether it is short-term or long-term, experts provided various input. According to El-Khalili, despite the fact that social media might appear to have a short-term, single issue oriented, impact, they do have a long-term, cultivating, effect as well. For example, in the past revealing parts of one's private life was considered unacceptable and invading one's privacy; however now people display their private life online through social media. Therefore, by time the idea became acceptable.

Also over a long period of time, social media redefined socialization and have had a strong effect on it, as mentioned by El-Khalili. Another long term effect of social media may be clarified in establishing relationships among people. Nowadays, young people join groups and meet people that they did not know before. Social media may help people to make new everlasting friendships and contacts.

Negm emphasized that social media can be invested to achieve developmental roles in society and they can certainly have long-term effect.

Effects of Citizen Journalism on Traditional Journalism

The three journalists interviewed Ashkar, Saeed and Gazzar, agreed on the opinion that the role of citizen journalism cannot be considered main or primary; it is rather a marginal one. They also mentioned that citizen journalism will not affect traditional journalism to an extent that would be considered significant. Accordingly, traditional journalism maintains more credibility and trustworthiness as a source of news and information when compared to citizen journalism. According to the journalists, professional journalists work based on professional criteria and are accountable to laws and regulations; while this is not the case when it comes to citizen journalists. However, it was mentioned that there still is a need for traditional media, especially national print media, to upgrade their role to stand up for competition from new forms of journalism. This upgrading can be in the form of having "services newspapers" besides their news coverage; "which offer services to the readers" that they cannot find elsewhere as suggested by Ashkar and Saeed.

According to Ashkar, "The main difference that distinguishes traditional journalism from citizen journalism is professionalism; journalists who work for traditional media institutions are professional". Furthermore, Gazzar mentioned that citizen journalism is mostly limited to the users of social media; most of which are university students. Accordingly, it can be inferred that it is only because of new technology that citizen journalism emerged and became wide spread.

According to Khairy both types of journalism; citizen and traditional should function together through some kind of participation. This will combine the advantages of both creating a more effective means of communication that targets wider segments in the society.

Use of Social Media in Political Activism

Social media are considered crucial in encouraging and fostering political activism. All political activists became known through the social media, and some of them became very influential and powerful after managing to gain readers and audience in general through social networking sites. We have seen during the last few years young people who were not known at all, but through the social media they managed to become “national heroes”, as referred to be Talaat and Mahmoud, who helped to make important changes. They even managed to change regimes and bring strong heads of states down. It was also indicated by both Mahmoud and Khairy that social media must be used rationally for good uses and not for fighting or exchange of accusations.

Social media were also important for public figures that are considered celebrities. People like Mohamed Al Baradei would never affect the public opinion or the young people without putting his tweets on Twitter and without the Facebook page that supported him. In brief, social media are very important tools for political participation not only online but also in real life.

Chapter Six

Discussion

Social media have been believed to provide young Egyptian citizens with a platform on which they can create their own input of news and information about current events. As a result, this study aims at investigating the extent to which social media helped represent and empower Egyptian youth for political participation as a crucial step for establishing and maintaining any democracy. The two most used social networking sites in Egypt are believed to be Facebook and Twitter. Consequently, the study focused on these two sites as representing social media in Egypt.

Over the past years, the Arab World has been witnessing turmoil as a result of the tyranny and repressiveness of the ruling regimes. Consequently, the peoples of different countries almost shared the same sufferings which resulted in several uprisings in some of the Arab countries. This has been dubbed by the media all over the world, the "Arab Spring". The name came from the belief that such uprisings could result in a democratic transition in countries that has long suffered from dictatorships. This is very much applicable to the case of Egypt.

With the spread of the Internet connection, and so social media, Egyptian youth managed to identify their common problems and concerns. This came as a result of the characteristics of social media that enable user-generated content, continuous exchange and sharing of information and enhanced interactivity among its users. Accordingly, the content over social networking sites is mainly created by ordinary citizens, who act as citizen journalists by engaging in reporting on events. This occurs in different forms, be it taking picture, videos or writing comments, reports, statuses or tweets. Consequently, according to scholars, this impacted the monopoly of traditional media on information providing. Traditional media outlets are no longer the sole gatekeepers or the only sources of information and news. A consequent would be that in turn they are not the only agenda setters as well.

In this study, the researcher used Uses and Gratifications as the theoretical framework. Throughout the study it is examined whether social media satisfies the needs of its users and the possible impact of fulfilling these needs and also whether social media have the ability to set an order of issues priorities in the minds of audiences. According to the interviewed opinion leaders, social media in many instances manage to set the priority of events in the minds of audiences as an impact of satisfying their needs.

Under this theoretical framework, three hypotheses (**H1a, H1b, and H2**) and two research questions (**RQ1 and RQ2**) were set and tested through survey questions and in-depth interviews.

When asked about their usage patterns, more than one fifth of the respondents mentioned that they access the Internet from their mobile phones. This goes back to the spread of smart phones which achieve portability and easy access. Most respondents (82.3 percent) mentioned that they access Facebook and/or Twitter on a daily basis. This shows that accessing social networking sites became a daily habit to most students. The difference between Cairo university students and those from the American University in Cairo was not significant when it comes to their usage patterns. However, in both universities females (92.3 percent at CU, 85.9 percent at AUC) showed more regularity in using Facebook and/or Twitter than males (67 percent at CU, 83.3 percent at AUC). This was confirmed with the majority of students mentioning that they spend more than four hours weekly online (51.8 percent) with a minority mentioning that they spend less than one hour a week (7 percent).

Furthermore, a majority (84 percent) of the respondents mentioned that they access social media for information and news, coming in the second place after entertainment and chatting with friends (92.3 percent). Furthermore, a large percentage (86.3 percent) of the study participants when asked about the type of information they obtain from Facebook and/or Twitter mentioned that they obtain political information which comes in the second place after social and cultural information (93.5 percent). Respondents were also asked about the extent to which they trust or could count on Facebook and/or Twitter as a credible sources of news/information. More than one third (39 percent) of the respondents mentioned that they "strongly agree" both/either social networking sites can

be considered a credible source of news and information. Also respondents mentioned that the type of political information they obtain from Facebook/Twitter the most is about demonstrations and protests (84.3 percent) followed by elections (56 percent) and then international issues (53.3 percent).

Based on these findings, **H1a** was supported. Social media consumption became a basic activity which youth engage in on a daily basis. Accordingly, it can be inferred that their consumption to social networking sites exceeds that to traditional media. Therefore, in many instances youth get to know about news and current events from social media before traditional media. This leads to social networking sites in many cases becoming primary sources of news. Besides, this was highly supported by the interviewed opinion leaders who clarified that social media have the advantage of rapid dissemination of news; information are published online before being distributed through traditional media outlets. This characteristic of immediate/instant reporting on events gives social media the advantage of being a primary source to its users.

Furthermore, **H1b** was also supported. The researcher thought, based on other studies, that being created by peers, information over social media would be regarded as more credible than traditional media that in many instances, are known to follow owners/editors' agendas. However based on the findings this was found to be true only in some instances but not to be generalized. This has been emphasized by the interviewees as well. They highlighted the fact that professional journalists who work for specialized traditional media institutions have more credibility. This goes back to traditional journalists being familiar with professionalism; being objective leads to more audience. Furthermore, traditional journalists can be held accountable when violating any of the laws, regulations or set standards. While on the other hand, citizen journalists, who publish content on social media, are difficult to hold accountable, and they report news from their own personal perspective. This perspective can be affected by emotions and personal agendas.

When asked about the type of pages/accounts they like/follow, a majority (62.3 percent) mentioned that they are interested in political pages/accounts which came in the second place after social and cultural pages/accounts (85.1 percent).The majority of the study

participants (95.3 percent) indicated they talk with friends/family members about the content they consume or obtain from Facebook and/or Twitter. This indicates that social media play a role in setting the public's agenda; though this role is somehow limited to a specific segment in the society. In other words, they provide the users with topics and issues to discuss and talk about with their friends and families in their real lives. There were no significant differences between students from the two universities in this respect.

Furthermore, according to the findings, social media do have an impact on motivating youth to participate in real life political events/activities. This was clarified with the percentage of those who indicated that discussions on Facebook/Twitter encouraged them to participate in January 25th revolution (89.3 percent), June 30th revolution (78.5 percent), presidential elections of 2012 (36.3 percent), January 2014 Constitutional referendum (26 percent) besides other events. More than one third of the respondents (37 percent) "strongly agree" that they become politically active citizens when they participate on Facebook and/or Twitter in any form.

Based on these findings, **H2** is supported. Online political activities can be a significant motive to encourage youth for real life political participation however it is not enough. There are other requirements for youth to become actually active in political life. According to Sara El Khalili, one of the opinion leaders interviewed, political participation should be preceded by four essential steps. First, a citizen should be active in seeking information. Second, he/she should form an opinion and have the desire to share and discuss it. Third, expression of public opinion, fourth is taking an actual action toward something and fifth is actual political participation. From these five step , the role of social media would be prominent. Social media provide the platform for free expression, where discussions and debates between different members or groups of the society occur. Social media can have a role in the five steps, as it provides citizens with information which they get to share and express their opinion on, they can also encourage them to take actual actions which was valid is the different uprisings and so can enhance their political participation.

As mentioned, free expression of opinions is essential to achieve political participation. Almost half of the participants (49.5 percent) mentioned that they "frequently" express

their opinions on Facebook/Twitter, while a percentage of 27 "sometimes" do so. Also, more than two fifths of the respondents (41.2 percent) indicated that they "strongly agree" that Facebook/Twitter helps them realize the importance of voicing their opinions in political issues, besides the revolution. In addition, respondents were asked about the impact the disappearance of Facebook/Twitter would have on them. The majority mentioned that they will not be able to take part in political events (65.8 percent), they will not be active citizens (47.5 percent), they will not be able to express their opinions on political issues (45.5 percent).

Findings have shown that in answer to **RQ1** social media can play a role in the long term process of transitioning to democracy by enhancing Egyptian youth's sense of political responsibility. Besides, in answer to **RQ2** findings have shown that social media have a role in making Egyptian youth realize the importance of being politically active citizens. This can be inferred from the responses that have shown that the impact of social media can be in the form of a long-term one, cultivating values and beliefs, besides being short-term, single issue oriented; encourages youth to rally for a raised cause/issue. This has been agreed on by opinion leaders as well. They agreed that by time social networking sites managed to implant ideas or beliefs that were not before existent which reflects its long term impact. Such impact is what reflects social media's ability to aid in the democratic process.

This is also valid in the sense that social media help improve and sustain the existence of two main pillars of any democracy; free flow of information and representing one segment in the society which is social media users. Through the continuous self and opinion expression by youth on Facebook/Twitter, a crucial segment of the society will be represented and heard by those in power. This has been strongly evident when the government shut down the Internet during the events of January 25th revolution. Also, a free flow of information is achieved in different ways. First, this occurs through citizen journalism enabled by the user-generated content feature. Citizens all the time report and comment on current events. Second, traditional media outlets exist online in general and on social media in specific. This is obvious through the massive number of followers to institutions such as CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera. Accordingly, based on the input of

opinion leaders, the best way to pave the way for democratic transition in Egypt is for traditional and social media to work together. Social media complement the role of traditional media in the sense that it has the capacity of rapid/instant dissemination of news besides providing space for audiences/citizens to be represented and have their input valued.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

The study aims at examining the role of social media in empowering Egyptian youth for political participation. The study relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Initially, a survey was carried out on a purposive sample of 400 young Egyptians aged 18 to 30 years; undergraduate and graduate students. They were selected from two universities; the American University in Cairo and Cairo University. The two universities were selected as they may reflect two different social backgrounds. Nine in-depth interviews were carried out on a selected sample of experts from three different calibers in the area of social media and political participation; professors, journalists and activists

According to the experts interviewed, the spread of social media goes back to the new communication technology which became effortless with the advent of the Internet. Also, January 25th Revolution was pointed at as one of the factors that led to a much wider use of social media among young Egyptians; especially Facebook and Twitter. Despite the fact that social media were introduced with the aim of easing free and rapid communication with friends and family, they also became significant sources of news and information.

Besides social media provided youth with a significant platform on which they get to express their opinions freely. In order to make changes in any society unity and collective action is required. On social media it becomes effortless to find individuals and groups with similar interests. As a result they enable unity through discussions between individuals who share the same concerns and consequently seek finding similar solutions to their problems. Social media's role in Egypt became most prominent since the January 25th revolution. Youth managed to discuss their concerns freely, they found out that they have more or less the same demands; bread, freedom and social justice. This acted as a spark that resulted in a collective action, the revolution, aiming to make real changes.

Based on this, the study tackles how social media may influence young Egyptians' political participation highlighting how they may empower Egyptian youth to become active political participants. Findings of the study have shown that most young Egyptians use social media on a daily basis. Facebook and Twitter were the most used social networking sites. Furthermore, according to the findings young Egyptians do not only consume social media from their homes but also from various places using their mobile phones; which indicates youth's heavy use of mobile phones. Students from the two universities were not different in this respect.

Findings have shown that females from Cairo University are considered heavy users (92.3 percent) of social media more than their male colleagues (67 percent). Same applies to students from the American University in Cairo; where females were using social media (85.9 percent) slightly more than males (82.2 percent). This may be due to the culture-related fact that males have more outdoor activities and they spend more time outside home than females and therefore, they devote less time to social media. More than half of the respondents mentioned that they use the Internet, regularly and more than 4 hours a week.

The majority of students (95.3 percent) mentioned that they talk with their friends and family members about the information and news they obtain from Facebook and Twitter. This shows that social media play a vital role in setting the public's agenda. It was also clear from findings that females from both universities talk more than males about the information they obtain from the social media. This may indicate that social media are more effective in setting the females' agenda; which goes along with the finding that they consume social media more than males do.

The role of social media in setting the public's agenda was also highlighted by some experts who perceive social media as agenda setters not only for the public but also for "the traditional media". When asked about other types of impact social media have, some experts pointed at their long-term effect, meaning that they cultivate influence that can be described as a "political socialization process" of citizens and especially youth. .

According to the findings of the study aiming to examine the reasons behind using social media, entertainment came in as the first reason (92.3 percent), while seeking information came in as the second one (84 percent). Students who were mainly members of online groups mentioned that the main types of information they were interested in were social and cultural information (93.5 percent) followed by political information (86.3 percent). In consequence, social, cultural and political pages/accounts were the most preferred by most respondents.

Many students trust social media as sources of information and news. The majority of the respondents expressed that they trust the information and news from social media more than those from traditional media which are mainly censored and controlled either by the state or private agendas and ownership. A great number of respondents relied on Facebook and Twitter as their main sources of information post January 25th era. This indicates that students' trust in the credibility and trustworthiness of social media increased with the events. A percentage of 43.3 indicated that they "strongly agree" that Facebook/Twitter are becoming their main sources of news. More than a quarter of the students mentioned that they "agree", while a small number of students "strongly disagree".

Findings have also shown that males from both universities were more than females with respect to preference of Facebook and Twitter as their main sources of news and information. In Cairo University, males who frequently prefer social media as sources of news represent 71.1 percent of the male respondents and females 6.8 percent. In the American University, 50 percent of males prefer social media compared to 31.5 percent of females. It was also clarified that females from the American University rely more on social media than those from Cairo University. Facebook and Twitter were the most important and trusted sources of information on demonstrations and protests (84.5 percent), elections (56 percent) and international issues (53.3 percent).

The above findings related to students' trust in social media contradict with what journalists indicated in the in-depth interviews. They argue that news and information provided by traditional media are more credible and trustworthy than news and information which are produced by users of social media. Interviewed journalists believe

that the work done by practiced journalists who work for professional media institutions is done on a professional basis and not on a “biased basis” as the case is with citizen journalists. One of the journalists believes that social media are used only for social contacts and not for information or news. University professors also believe that information and news produced by news agencies and television are more trustworthy and credible than news from the social media. It was clarified from findings of the interviews that journalists see the citizen journalism as having a complementary role that cannot be counted on solely. They believe that contents of citizen journalism are biased and not professional.

Journalists also admit the value and importance of new technology to their traditional work. They believe that their media outlets have “a combination of both new and traditional media”. Most media outlets are very keen on having their own online websites and even their own Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. This may clarify the effect and importance of both traditional and new media. Interviewed journalists also mentioned that they do their best to stay in touch with social media users and try to attract them to be among their audiences. Now most media outlets have some “integrated newsroom” which combine both new and traditional media contents.

A percentage of 49.5 of the survey respondents indicated that they frequently express their opinions and attitudes through posts, statuses or tweets on Facebook/Twitter. It was also found that males from the two universities, were expressing their views and opinions more than females. Males from Cairo University were very much in support of expressing their views and opinions online (73.2 percent) compared to males from the American University (56.5 percent). However, females were much less enthusiastic in expressing their opinion online than males in both universities. In Cairo University females who were frequently expressing their opinion online represented 32 against 38.9 percent from the American University.

It was found that males in general strongly agree on the importance of online participation and its contribution to political activism in real life. However, there were some differences among the two universities. Males in Cairo University were more in favor of online participation (62.9 percent) than males from the American University

(52.2 percent). At the same time females in the American University (30.6 percent) were more in favor of online participation than those from Cairo University (5.8 percent).

Findings have shown that online discussions have a role in encouraging real-life activism and real political participation. That was clear during the January 25th revolution (89.3 percent) and the June protests (78.5 percent) during which online discussions on Facebook and Twitter encouraged students to participate in real political activities. This was also clear during the presidential elections of 2012 (36.3 percent) and the January 2014 constitutional referendum (26 percent). Online discussions were also important and influential in the first parliamentary elections after the January 25th revolution (25.8 percent) and the constitutional referendum of March 2011 (25.5 percent).

According to most interviewed experts, social media create the space for people to express their opinions, debate and discuss. In consequence, social media can pave the way to democracy but they cannot be considered as the only factor. Democracy needs many other things to pave the way. The use of social media in itself is a form of democracy as they give equal chances and spaces to everyone regardless of their social or economic background; and they allow for supporters and opposition to co-exist. Moreover, social media may play an important role in democratic transformation; in the sense that they present fast and free platforms for debating among its users which represent a crucial segment in the society. They can also supplement the role of traditional media though social media may be seen as less credible sources but they still can also guide citizens and spread democratic ideas. However, this can only be limited to social media users and not to the whole population.

Facebook and/or Twitter have played vital roles in making students realize the importance of voicing their opinions in political issues in the wake of the Egyptian revolution (71 percent). Males from Cairo University appreciate, to a great extent, the importance of online political participation (64.9 percent) than those from the American University (55.4 percent). Females from Cairo University did not appreciate the importance of online political participation as the females from the American University (37 percent).

More than half the students in total (55.8 percent) consider themselves politically active citizens when they participate on Facebook and/or Twitter (in any form) discussing current political issues. They also believe that if Facebook and/or Twitter disappeared, they won't be able to take part in "political events" (65.8 percent) or be "active citizens" (47.5 percent) or "express their opinion on political issues (45.5 percent).

The interviewed experts think there are different degrees of behaviors/attitudes that youth should display to be considered politically active. Political participation is not only limited to becoming parts of demonstrations, but young people need to act as pressure groups which seek to fight against corruption and make changes. Also civic engagement is an initial step to reach actual political participation.

Experts also believe that the concept of political participation has developed. In the old days political participation was limited to voting, but this has changed after the revolution and it is not any more limited to voting. Most experts hope that young people will use social media more effectively, not only for protests and demonstrations but also for more positive political involvement in society.

Most experts also think that social media can play a role in encouraging young people's political participation by helping them to debate and join political groups and parties. They can also help young people to play social roles in societies and become good citizens turning into social activists and then to political activists. Political participation, according to the interviewed opinion leaders, does not have to be displayed through violent acts; there are peaceful forms of political participation with respect to the order of law and the state such as those previously mentioned.

Limitations of the Study:

The study was carried out on university students from the American University in Cairo and Cairo University. Therefore, it was limited to respondents living in Cairo which is the capital city of Egypt. There are other geographical areas which need to be studied as well. Though there is a large percentage of the population living in Cairo but still it does not represent Egypt as a whole, it is only one of the twenty seven governorates. These areas were not studied because of time constraints.

Since the impact of new media on political participation was shown to have a direct relationship, this means that those with no Internet access are going to be marginalized in different ways. This is considered another limitation of the study, as the researcher could not investigate this area as a result of time constraints.

The study was also limited to students who represent a big proportion of Egyptian youth. But we still have other young Egyptians who are not students.

Recommendations for Future Research:

Future research can replicate the study in other geographical areas such as Upper Egypt and Northern Governorates taking into consideration that the protests and demonstrations were importantly vital in governorates such as Alexandria, Mansoura, Al Mahla, Suez, and other southern governorates.

The study universe was limited to Cairo which is an urban area. Therefore, examining the differences between urban and rural areas with respect to the use of social media and the role they play in empowering young people for political participation can be examined.

There is also digital divide between Cairo and other less developed/rural areas of Egypt with no Internet access and digital illiteracy. Therefore this is another area that remains to be examined in detail; the downside of new media empowerment for youth: the digital divide. This could act an obstacle in the face of transitioning to democracy which needs to be studied.

Further, the impact of opinion leaders versus social media on youth or people in general could be studied using the Two Step Flow Theory.

Also, a study on young people who are not students may also be suggested. That will open the scope for good and important comparisons.

There is also a need to replicate this study on older people, males and females, as a different segment in the society and compare their attitudes and perceptions to those of young people.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Approval of Institutional Review Board

(The American University in Cairo)

Appendix B
Approval of CAPMAS

Appendix C

Consent Forms

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: Social Media Empowering Egyptian Youth for Political Participation

Principal Investigator: Sally Tayie, Email: stayie@aucegypt.edu

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to examine the role played by the social media in empowering and encouraging the Egyptian youth for political participation, and the findings may be presented as a part of Master of Arts thesis study. The expected duration of your participation is five to ten minutes.

The procedures of the research will be as follows; survey questionnaires are to be distributed to a purposive sample, graduate and undergraduate students, in the class room setting .

*There will not be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research.

*There will not be benefits to you from this research.

*The information you provide for purposes of this research is anonymous.

Questions about the research should be directed to Sally Tayie at 012 2239 2267

*Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____



استمارة موافقة مسبقة للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية

عنوان البحث : وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ودورها في تمكين الشباب المصري من المشاركة السياسية

الباحث الرئيسي: سالى طايح – طالبة دراسات عليا بقسم الإعلام بالجامعة الأمريكية
البريد الإلكتروني: stayie@aucegypt.edu
الهاتف: 01222392267

انت مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية عن الدور الذي تلعبه وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في تمكين الشباب المصري وتشجيعه على المشاركة السياسية ، وسوف يتم عرض نتائج هذه الدراسة في إطار رسالة ماجستير في الإعلام ، ونتوقع أن تستغرق مشاركتكم ما بين خمس وعشر دقائق.

هدف الدراسة هو التعرف على دور وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في دعم المشاركة السياسية للشباب المصري

نتائج البحث ستُنشر في رسالة ماجستير في الإعلام بالجامعة الأمريكية.

المدة المتوقعة للمشاركة في هذا البحث من خمس إلى عشر دقائق

اجراءات الدراسة تشتمل على صحيفة الاستقصاء كأداة لجمع البيانات من عينة عمدية من طلاب مرحلة الدراسة الجامعية والدراسات العليا ، وسيتم جمع البيانات داخل الفصول

السرية واحترام الخصوصية: المعلومات التي ستدلى بها في هذا البحث سوف تكون سرية / ستكون هويتك غير محددة.

أي أسئلة متعلقة بهذه الدراسة أو حقوق المشاركين فيها يجب ان توجه الى سالى طايح
01222392267.

ان المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ماهي الا عمل تطوعي, حيث أن الامتناع عن المشاركة لا يتضمن أى عقوبات أو فقدان أى مزايا تحقق لك. ويمكنك أيضا التوقف عن المشاركة في أى وقت من دون عقوبة أو فقدان لهذه المزايا.

الامضاء:

اسم المشارك :

التاريخ :/...../.....

Appendix D
The Questionnaire in English

This survey is a done by a graduate student at the American University in Cairo as a part of a study on Egyptian youth's use of social media and their impact on empowering them for political participation. Your collaboration by answering the following questions which will take a few minutes is highly appreciated.

1. Do you have Internet access?
 - Yes
 - No (terminate the survey)
2. Please specify your age range:
 - Less than 18
 - 18 – 25
 - 25 – 30
 - Above 30
3. Do you have a Facebook and/or Twitter account?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Where do you usually access the Internet?
 - Home
 - Work
 - Public place
 - Other(specify).....
5. How often do you access Facebook and/or Twitter?
 - Less than once a week
 - Once a week
 - More than once a week
 - Daily
6. On average how many hours per week do you spend on your Facebook and/or Twitter account combined?
 - Less than one hour
 - 1 – 2 hours
 - 2 – 3 hours
 - 3 – 4 hours
 - More than 4 hours

7. Do you talk with your friends and/or family members about the information you obtain from Facebook and/or Twitter?
- Yes
 - No
8. Why do you access your Facebook and/or Twitter account? (please check all that apply)
- For informational purposes
 - For entertainment purposes
 - Other
- (specify).....
9. What kind of information do you obtain from Facebook and/or Twitter? (please check all that apply)
- Political
 - Social/Cultural
 - Scientific/Health
 - Traffic
 - Other
- (specify).....
10. Are you a member of any groups or pages on Facebook and/or Twitter?
- Yes (if yes please go to question 11)
 - No (if no please go to question 12)
11. What types of Facebook pages and/or Twitter accounts do you follow?
- Political
 - Social/Cultural
 - Scientific/Health
 - Traffic
 - Other
- (specify).....
12. I prefer to get my information from Facebook and/or Twitter because I trust their news more than TV or newspapers
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

13. Facebook and/or Twitter have been my main sources of news in the post-January 25th era

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. On which political issues do you usually obtain information from Facebook and/or Twitter?

- Elections
 - Demonstrations/protests
 - International issues
 - Other
- (specify).....

15. I express my opinion through posts, statuses or tweets on Facebook and/or twitter

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

16. Discussions on Facebook and/or Twitter about political issues have played a role to become active in the following instances (please check all that apply)

- January 25th revolution
- March 2011 Constitutional referendum
- The first parliamentary elections after the January 25th revolution
- The presidential elections after the revolution
- June 30th protests
- January 14th Constitutional referendum
- Other

(specify).....

17. Facebook and/or Twitter have played a role in my realizing the importance of voicing my opinion in political issues besides the Egyptian revolution

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. I consider myself a politically active citizen when I participate on Facebook and/or Twitter (in any form) on current political issues

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19. If Facebook and/or Twitter disappeared (please check all that applies)

- I will not be able to express my opinion on political issues
- I will not be updated on current events
- I will be less politically active as a citizen
- It will not make a difference in my engagement in political events

Please specify your:

- Gender
 - Male
 - Female
- Occupation
 - Undergraduate student
 - Graduate student
 - Other
 (specify).....
- University
 - Cairo University
 - The American University in Cairo

Thank you for your time and collaboration

Appendix E
The Questionnaire in Arabic

تقوم طالبة دراسات عليا بالجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة بإجراء هذا المسح كجزء من دراسة عن استخدام الشباب المصري لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وتأثيرها على تشجيع الشباب على المشاركة السياسية ، ونشكر لكم تعاونكم بالإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية التى لن تستغرق إلا بضعة دقائق.

1- هل تستخدم الانترنت ؟

- نعم

- لا (انهى المسح)

2- أرحو أن تحدد سنك :

- أقل من 18 سنة

- 18 - 25 سنة

- 25 - 30 سنة

- أكثر من 30 سنة

3- هل لديك حساب على الفيس بوك أو تويتر ؟

- نعم

- لا

4- أين تستخدم الانترنت فى العادة ؟

- فى المنزل

- فى العمل

- فى مكان عام

- أخرى (تذكر)

5- ما هو مدى استخدامك للفيس بوك و / أو تويتر ؟

- أقل من مرة فى الأسبوع
- مرة فى الأسبوع
- أكثر من مرة فى الأسبوع
- يوميا

6- فى المتوسط كم عدد الساعات التى تقضيها أسبوعيا على الفيس بوك أو التويتر أو الاثنين معا ؟

- أقل من ساعة
- من 1 - 2
- من 2 - 3
- من 3 - 4
- أكثر من 4 ساعات

7- هل تتحدث مع بعض أصدقائك أو أفراد من أسرتك عن المعلومات التى تحصل عليها من الفيس بوك أو تويتر ؟

- نعم
- لا

8- لماذا تستخدم الفيس بوك أو تويتر أو كلاهما ؟

(يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- للحصول على معلومات

- للتسلية

- أخرى (تذكر)

9- ماهى نوع المعلومات التى تحصل عليها من الفيس بوك أو تويتر أو كلاهما ؟

(يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- معلومات سياسية
- معلومات اجتماعية / ثقافية
- معلومات علمية / صحية
- معلومات عن أحوال المرور
- أخرى (تذكر)

10- هل أنت عضو باحدى المجموعات أو الصفحات على الفيس بوك أو تويتر أو كلاهما ؟

- نعم (اذهب لسؤال 11)
- لا (اذهب لسؤال 12)

11- ماهى صفحات الفيس بوك او حسابات التويتر التى تفضلها ؟

- السياسية
- الاجتماعية / الثقافية
- العلمية / الصحية
- المرور
- أخرى (تذكر)

12- أفضل الحصول عدل معلوماتة من الفيس بوك أو تويتر أو كلاهما لاننى أثق فى الاخبار التى أحصل عليها منهما أكثر من التلفزيون والجرائد:

- أوافق بشدة
- أوافق
- محايد
- لا أوافق
- لا أوافق على الإطلاق

13- أصبح كل من الفيس بوك وتويتر هي مصادر إى الأساسية للاخبار بعد أحداث 25 يناير:

- أوافق بشدة
- أوافق
- محايد
- لا أوافق
- لا أوافق على الطلاق

14- ماهى أهم القضايا السياسية التى تحصل على معلومات عنها من الفيس بوك أو تويتر أو كلاهما:

- الانتخابات
- المظاهرات / الاحتجاجات
- القضايا الدولية
- أخرى (تذكر)

15- أعبر عن رأى على الفيس بوك أو التويتر أو كلاهما :

- فى أغلب الأحوال
- أحيانا
- نادرا
- لا أفعل ذلك نهائيا

16- لعبت المناقشات من خلال الفيس بوك والتويتر دورا فى الأحداث الآتية :

- (يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)
- ثورة 25 يناير

- الاستفتاء على الدستور فى مارس 2011
- الانتخابات البرلمانية الأولى بعد ثورة 25 يناير
- الانتخابات الرئاسية بعد الثورة
- احتجاجات 30 يونيه
- الاستفتاء على الدستور فى 14 يناير 2014
- أخرى (تذكر)

17- لعب الفيس بوك والتويتر أو كلاهما دورا فى تعريفى بأهمية الادلاء برأى فى القضايا السياسية علاوة على الثورة المصرية :

- أوافق بشدة
 - أوافق
 - محايد
 - لا أوافق
 - لا أوافق على الإطلاق
- 18 - اعتبر نفسى مواطنا ناشطا سياسيا عندما أشارك فى مناقشات الفيس بوك أو تويتتر أو كلاهما فىا يتعلق بالقضايا السياسية :

- أوافق بشدة
 - أوافق
 - محايد
 - لا أوافق
 - لا أوافق على الإطلاق
- 19- إذا اختفى الفيس بوك أو تويتتر أو كلاهما :
- (يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- لن أستطيع أن أعبر عن رائى فى القضايا السياسية
- لن أحصل على معلومات حديثة عن الأحداث الجارية
- سوف أكون مواطنا أقل مشاركة سياسية
- لن يؤثر ذلك على مشاركتى فى الأحداث السياسية

برجاء ذكر:

النوع :

- ذكر

- أنثى

الوظيفة:

- طالب

- باحث دراسات عليا

- آخر (تذكر)

الجامعة:

- جامعة القاهرة

- الجامعة الأمريكية

أشكرك على وقتك وتعاونك ،

Appendix F

In-Depth Interview Questions

Introduction:

With the recent uprisings across the Arab World, including Egypt, the role that social media play in mobilizing young people to partake in those uprisings has become central to public and media discourse. In Egypt, some have even dubbed it the "Facebook revolution."

General Questions:

1. In your opinion, what factors have contributed to the rise and spread of social media use among youth in Egypt?
2. (a) Do you think social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, can be considered main sources of news and information especially during and after January 25th and June 30th revolutions?
(b) If so, how do they compare and contrast with more traditional news sources?
(c) Do you consider either source type (i.e. traditional versus social media) more credible/reliable than the other? If so, why?
3. Now that traditional media are no longer the only sources of news, how much of a role do you think social media play in prioritizing issues and topics for Egyptians?
4. Do you think social media play any role in the process of transitioning to democracy? If so, please describe this role as you see it.
5. What do you believe are the criteria by which we can measure whether and to what extent an Egyptian youngster is actively involved in the political life? i.e. the attitudes and/or behaviors Egyptian youth should display to become actually active participants in the political life

Questions to Professors:

1. The theory of Agenda Setting has always referred to the role of traditional media in setting the public's agenda;
 - a) With the rise of social media do you think that social media play any role in setting the public's agenda?
 - b) If so, please describe this role as you see it.

2. There are two effect models that describe the impact of media on audiences: short-term behavioral (specific causes or issues oriented), and long-term attitudinal (cultivating values and beliefs, impacting audiences over a long period of time):

- a) In light of these two models how would you describe the type of impact social media have on Egyptian youth?
- b) Why do you think this model (the one chosen or both of them depending on the interviewee's response) best applies?

Questions to Journalists:

1. It has always been known that control over information has been kept in the hands of journalists or those who are part of a professional media institution; with the rise of social media, the phenomenon of citizen journalism became widely spread which created other sources of information besides the professional media institutions:

Citizen journalism applies when normal citizens engage in journalistic activities such as "the collection, dissemination and analysis of news and information...especially by means of the Internet"

- a) Do you think social media have any role in strengthening citizen journalism? If so, please describe this role as you see it.
- b) How far do you think the spread of citizen journalism impacted the role of traditional media as the gate keepers of information?

2. How would you describe the difference between citizen journalists on Facebook and/or Twitter and professional journalists, credibility or reliability wise, from the audience's perspective?

Questions to Activists:

1.
 - a) Do you use Facebook and/or Twitter for raising issues or cause?
 - b) What features/characteristics on social media make you use it for political activism?
2. Based on the (criteria) through which you defined political participation:

- a) Do you think social media is effective in empowering young Egyptians for political participation?
 - b) If so, what attributes/merits do social media possess to make this happen?
3. If we categorized the effect media have on audiences into short-term behavioral (specific causes or issues oriented and triggers immediate behaviors) and long-term (implanting values such as citizenship and political participation as a long term responsibility):
- a) In light of these two categories, how would you describe the impact of social media on Egyptian youth? Why?

List of Interviewed Opinion Leaders:

- Professor Sara El Khalili, Adjunct Professor, The American University in Cairo
- Professor Taha Negm, Head of Mass Communication Department, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University
- Professor Arabi El Toukhy, Sociology Department, Alexandria University
- Mohamed Al Askhar, Senior Journalist, Al Ahram Publishing House
- Mahmoud Saeed, Senior Journalist, Rose Al Youssef Publishing House
- Mohamed El Gazzar, Senior Journalist, Rose Al Youssef Publishing House
- Ahmed Khairy, Activist
- Ihab Mahmoud, Activist,
- Ghada Talaat, Activist